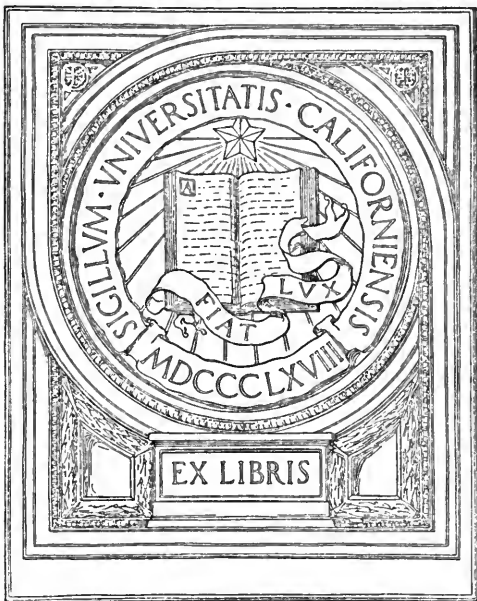
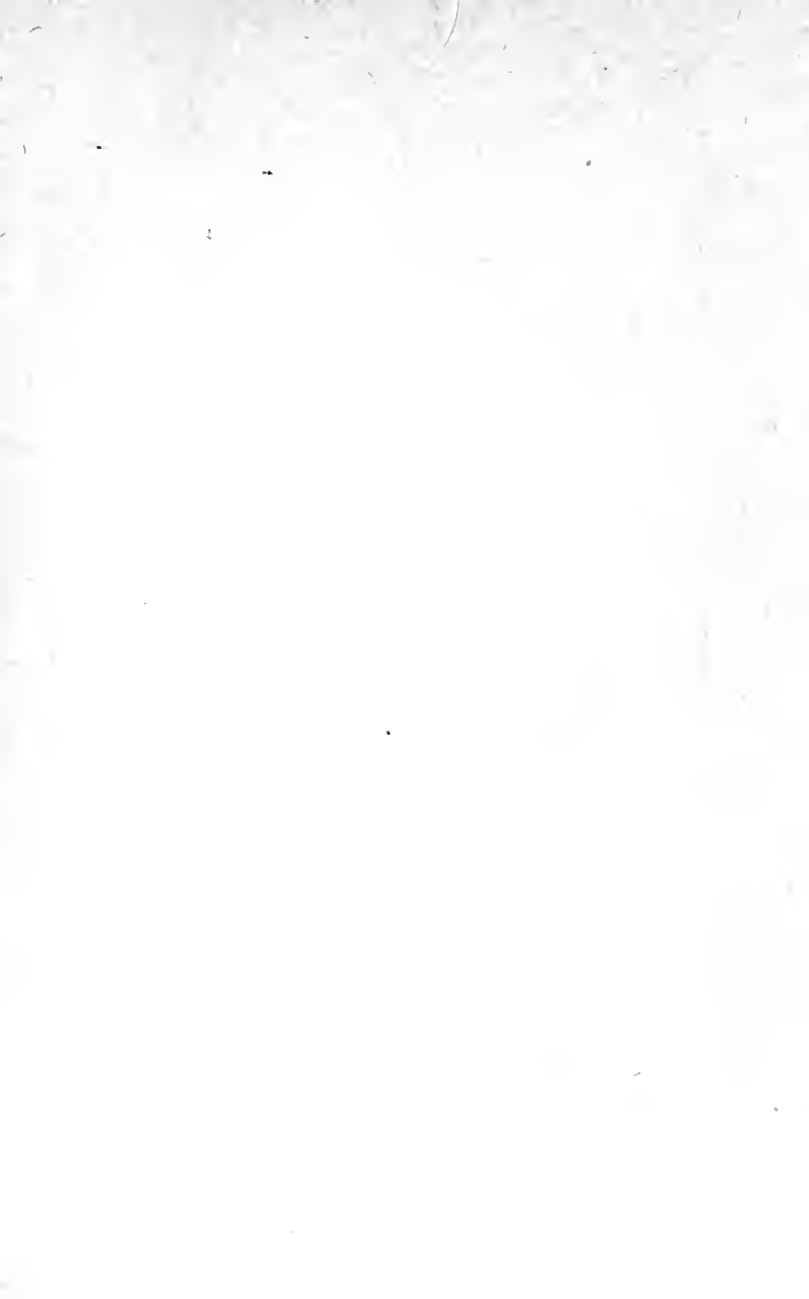


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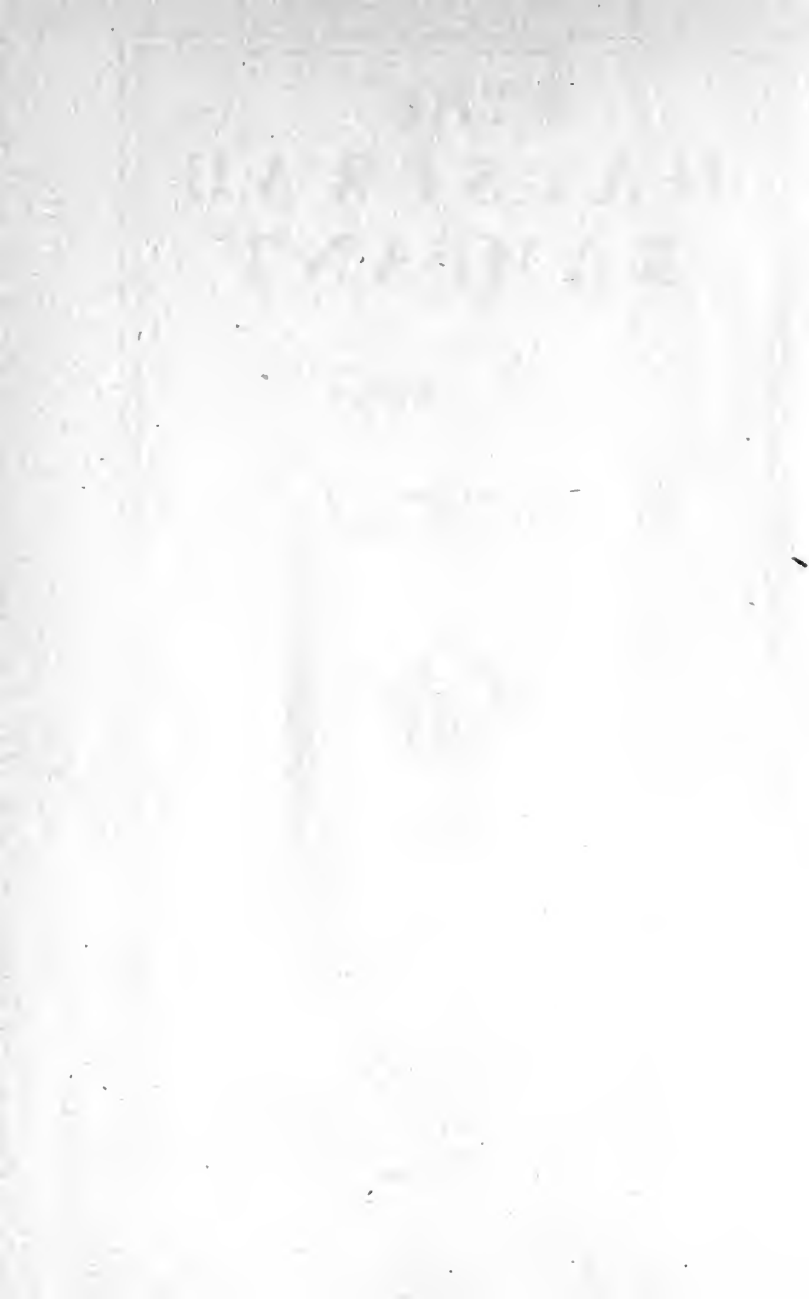
THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON





THE
HAUSFRAU RAMPANT

E. V. L U C A S



THE HAUSFRAU RAMPANT

BY
E. V. LUCAS

FROM THE GERMAN OF
JULIUS STINDE
//



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To the memory of

A. E. B. R.,

*some of whose last hours, in
a long and distressing illness,
were lightened by the Buch-
holz narrative.*

MAR 27 '43

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MORRISON

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THE HAUSFRAU RAMPANT





THE HAUSFRAU RAMPANT

INTRODUCTION

I

I CAME upon the Buchholzes by pure chance. It has before been pointed out that, no matter how fully or choicely furnished are one's own shelves, the most entertaining books are on other people's. Had I not taken a flat in an old Venetian palace I might never have come across Dr. Stinde's first volume, for it has long been out of print. But on a certain night, after another of those usual unequal contests with a mosquito which render one wakeful and in that fractious mental mood when one's own supply of reading matter fails at every turn, I began the exploration of my landlord's shelves and found the worthy Hausfrau of the

Landsbergerstrasse. And, somehow, when I left, the book left too. One day I must send it back.

Having read the first volume I ransacked old book-shops for the other three, making four in all, which had been published in England; and at last I found them. These are entitled, in the English translation, *The Buchholz Family*, translated by L. Dora Schmitz; *The Buchholz Family, Second Part*, with the same translator; *Frau Wilhelmine*, translated by Harriet F. Powell; and *The Buchholzes in Italy*, also translated by Harriet F. Powell. My work has been to extract from them what seemed to me the most entertaining passages, the best of the material being in the first and second parts, and join them together with some explanatory cement. I might, had I wished, have borrowed also from the further sequels, one, by Dr. Stinde himself, describing the Frau's adventures in the Orient, and another, by an unauthorised disciple, which took her to Paris. But the cream is here.

The Buchholz Family is not like any other work with which I am acquainted. No doubt, as some of the critics found it, it is Dickensian in parts, although without any of Dickens's abounding comic fertility: it is more realistic than that. The nearest things to it are two English books of humour in both of which we have a satirical self-revelation: *The Diary of a*

Nobody, by George Grossmith and his brother Weedon, and *Eliza*, by Barry Pain. In each of these histories, both of which started out to be purely funny but were too much for their authors and became by flashes real documents, domestic anxiety and triumph form the theme and the narrator's character is gradually unfolded as the story proceeds. But *The Buchholz Family* is more consistently of the stuff of which real novels are made. And here, too, although the author's rein on himself is always tighter than those English writers', the central figure gradually conquers. At any rate, I feel sure that when Dr. Stinde was sketching out the Frau's first letter he had no notion that it was destined to be followed by so many others or any of the more serious ones. There is, however, good precedent for such development: *The Pickwick Papers* began purely as letterpress about a farcical club to accompany some sporting drawings.

In Germany the Buchholzes had instant success, first as a serial and then in book form. In two years from publication the first part had passed into fifty editions. Among its admirers was the man of blood and iron himself, the great Bismarck, who sent to Dr. Stinde the following appreciative letter:

Dear Sir,—Your having kindly sent me your
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book, gives me a welcome opportunity of thanking you for the pleasant intercourse I have enjoyed with the Buchholzes during the long hours of leisure which have been enforced upon me by my illness. From the subtlety of your delineations of Berlin life, and your exact reproduction of the local dialect, I—who have spent half my life in Berlin—should never have supposed but that the author was a Berliner bred and born. The discovery of my error has served only to increase my admiration of the fidelity of your pictures. I trust Frau Buchholz's life may yet awhile withstand the hostile attacks of Frau Bergfeldt, and that she may be induced to delight us with some further sketches.—v. BISMARCK.

Whether the further sketches would have followed without the suggestion from this powerful source, I cannot say. Probably. Still, it is not an uninteresting thought that Bismarck may have prolonged the Frau's literary life. The Chancellor, I might say, was Stinde's friend not only as a reader but, afterwards, in private life.

The reception accorded the first part on its appearance in England in 1886 was also warm; sufficient at any rate to justify the translation of the sequels too. But, considering all things, it is not likely, I imagine, ever to be reprinted there again. The *Times* reviewer found in Dr. Stinde an affinity to Dickens. The *Spectator* was reminded of Dutch pictures. *Blackwood's Magazine*, never very easy

to please, also was reminded of Dutch art and had the warmest enthusiasm for Dr. Stinde's genius. The *Scotsman* considered *The Buchholz Family*—and I have personally proved the truth of the criticism—"one of the best books to be had for reading aloud either in social gatherings or in the family circle." Their author himself realising this quality of his work, he was in great demand all over Germany to give public Buchholz readings. According to his friend, Herr Möller, he read exceedingly well. America seems to have imported some copies, even if an actual edition was not published there, for I find the *New York Nation* remarking that "Dr. Stinde has made his *Wilhelmine Buchholz* so vitally feminine in her petty traits that she would appeal to the heart of many a woman in other ranks of society, who would, nevertheless, consider this German woman 'common.' " In France the book had fame too, for it was awarded by the Academy a "Certificat d'aptitude à l'enseignement de la langue Allemande dans les lycées et collèges." Other works which had earlier won this distinction were Goethe's *Italian Travels* and Schiller's *Charm and Dignity*.

II

Before coming to Frau Buchholz let me say something about her creator.

A portrait of Julius Stinde prefixed to his collection of stories entitled *Heinz Treulieb*, 1906, shows him to have possessed a large frame, an intellectual brow and the countenance of a man of the world. Something of a *bon vivant* in it, a simple, bland kindness, and much of the humorous observer. He also looks unmarried, as he was. It is from the biographical introduction to this volume, by Herr Max Möller, that I have obtained most of the information that I have gathered about the author of our book.

Julius Stinde was born at Lensahn in Holstein on August 28th, 1841. His father, whom his son idolised as a model of all that was patient and steadfast and good, was the pastor. He remained at Lensahn even in face of an offer to become a Court chaplain; and he accepted the post of Provost only on condition that he need not leave his country parishioners. Another son, who was a hopeless invalid through an accident in childhood, took to painting and was promising well when he died. A sister kept house for Julius after their mother's death.

Lensahn remained to Stinde throughout his life a kind of earthly paradise, whither he went always to spend his birthday, and where he was buried, in a grave next to his parents. On the day of his funeral his friend Möller dropped into the inn to

drink to his memory in the room where he had so often played billiards, and one of the villagers, after hearing of the high esteem in which Stinde was held in Berlin and indeed all over Germany, and the fame of his writings, remarked that it was no doubt true, but very difficult to believe by old associates who remembered him as a boy dyeing the ducks a brilliant aniline. That single reminiscence of his childhood must suffice.

On leaving school Julius studied chemistry and natural science, and after taking his degree in 1863 became a factory chemist in Hamburg. As a student, I gather from Möller, he was full-blooded and could hold his own both at the tavern and with the fencing foils. He also read omnivorously, his favourite books being the classics and treatises on magic and the black arts, in which he retained his interest to the end. Another of his later hobbies was cookery and he became famous as a judge of wine.

Later, while continuing his work as a chemist, Stinde added technical journalism to his labours, and first contributed to, and then edited, the *Hamburg Reform*, a paper devoted to pharmaceutical and sanitary interests, and it was in this capacity that he wrote his first book, an elaborate and very thorough monograph entitled *Wasser und Seife* (Water and

Soap) in which every aspect of scientific cleanliness is considered. Not wishing to put his own name on the title page—for probably he already had ambitions to be known as a very different kind of author—Stinde was amused to borrow that of the good soul who acted as charwoman at the *Reform* office—Frau Wilhelmine Buchholz. So from this worthy lady came not only his pseudonym but later the name that is now a household word wherever German is spoken; but whether she was aware of it Herr Möller does not say. Quite conceivably not, for the charwomen of literary men can be profoundly ignorant of their employers' activities.

Water and Soap was Stinde's first book. His second was also somewhat remote from the work by which his fame was to be made—a eulogy of Wagner and particularly of his *Meistersinger*. Wagner at that time—in the early eighteen seventies—had still not convinced everyone of his genius, and had many detractors; and Stinde, who adored the new music, wrote in his paper a series of critical and analytical articles in praise of the composer. These, when published in 1873, under the title of *Meistersingermotive*, he dedicated to Riccius, the *Meistersinger* conductor and so true a Wagnerite that he too had come under the displeasure of the pundits.

One of the closing passages of the little book runs thus:

"The backbiter is as old as the world. The first backbiter was Cain who slew his brother Abel, and as often as the flames of a joyous sacrifice rise to Heaven from the altar of art, envy causes a new Cain to arise, in order that he may slay the sacrificer."

And this is the end of the whole argument:

"In the *Meistersinger* we see genius triumphant, and unconsciously one is overcome by a feeling of confidence that the noble and the true are the portals which will open themselves, notwithstanding the efforts of the scoffers to keep them closed.

"And these Portals alone lead to the wonderland of poesy."

It is ancient history how the world came round to the view of Stinde, who must have derived much satisfaction from the conversion.

In after years Wagner visited Hamburg as guest at a banquet in his honour, at which this unknown champion, who was present, with characteristic modesty hid away in seclusion. "But where is Dr. Julius Stinde?" Wagner inquired. "Why is he far away in a corner? I should like to sit opposite him;" and sit there the Master did.

We have seen Stinde now as the editor of a trade organ, as the author of a work on sanitation, and as

the valiant exponent of a revolutionary composer. His next literary adventure was the writing of a comedy of Hamburg life entitled *The Troubles of Hamburg*, which was so successful that he was relieved of all financial anxiety, if ever he had any, and took advantage of his new affluence to remove to Berlin. And here I may say that although Stinde wrote other plays, largely in the Holstein dialect, he never liked the theatre. In fact he disliked it so much as deliberately to forego the rewards it promised him. There was an atmosphere behind the scenes which his sensitiveness could not tolerate.

In Berlin Stinde became active and experimental. He continued to write on chemistry and other scientific subjects; he wrote stories, serious and light, tender poems, and also fairy tales, of which fascinating branch of literature he had a profound knowledge and was careful to observe all the rules. Indeed, Herr Möller tells us, he could be very angry with the frivolous levity which some narrators for the young brought to their sacred task.

It was in 1876 that Stinde settled in Berlin, and it was in 1878 or 1879 that he remembered his old Hamburg charwoman's name and decided to make use of it; this time not so much sheltering behind it as expressing himself imaginatively through it. For the purposes of satire he would assume the

characteristics of a Wilhelmine Buchholz in rather a superior walk of life, a comfortable Berlin bourgeoisie, and speaking through her, as a ventriloquist through a doll, genially but none the less searchingly lay bare the domestic comedy of this new city of his adoption. That he should so quickly have penetrated below the surface of Berlin is a proof of his remarkable gifts of sympathetic observation and assimilation. How successful he was in this experiment and how popular he became, we have seen.

But Stinde, it seems, like many another author who has prided himself on his variousness, was, although pleased by his success, piqued to find that the public associated him solely with the Buchholzes and disregarded, or received without enthusiasm, his other work; and in consequence he came gradually to write less and less. Herr Möller considers his best book *Der Liedermacher*, 1893. "Here," he says, "we find his quiet, manly worth, his St. George-like anger at everything which is false, his silent contempt for all that is not thorough, his fine sympathy for the little sorrows and joys of womanhood, his north German melancholy, his childish pleasure in all that is droll; and we find also his great redeeming humour and his righteous faith. The romance describes in fascinating manner, now serious, now with delicate fun, in turn, the adventures of a young

poet who enters Berlin, full of ideals, as Luther once visited Rome, and who, after being deceived, robbed, disillusioned, and disgusted, is ruined by his surroundings. Stinde gave his hero many of his own characteristics, but he did not bestow on him his humour and his physical strength, with the result that he withered in the bud." But, even with this novel before them, the public still spoke only of Frau Buchholz.

This fact did not tend to his happiness; while there were other causes to make him melancholy. "Julius Stinde," says Herr Möller, whose sympathetic understanding of his friend and pride in him make very pleasant reading, "stood alone. In spite of the true love of his brother and sisters and the friendship of a good man—the painter Paulsen—which always accompanied him, he stood alone, for he was denied the greatest, namely, love and a home of his own. His pride prevented him from discussing this matter, but whoever was intimately connected with him was bound to discover that he had experienced a great disappointment in love and that the wound would never heal. He, who was able to depict such dear, good women, could often laugh and speak very bitterly—of course without becoming sentimental—when the talk was of those who were heartless. Who the woman was that had de-

ceived him remains his secret." Perhaps we may assume that she was beautiful from the circumstance that he once remarked, "Those with the Madonna-faces can be the worst."

Not only was Stinde a little sore about his own failure to make a wide reputation, but his generous nature suffered when the tide of popularity receded from his painter friend Paulsen. When Paulsen died and Stinde buried him, he buried, says Herr Möller, "a large part of his cheerfulness. After that, light jubilant happiness was no longer his guest." "Many a man," Stinde wrote, in one of the last of the Buchholz papers, in 1904, "outlives his hopes; many a man dies with them. He may still go about, and drink and laugh; but really he is dead."

Although popular in every circle, and a charming conversationalist from a richly-stored mind, Stinde gradually came to confine his visits to a very few houses, in town and country. Among his closest friends were children and domestic animals. "Children," says Herr Möller, "always took to him, for they knew that he was the best of playfellows. He would accede to their behests with infinite patience, and carve the prettiest of things for them. His monks' heads, which he cut out of chestnuts, making use of the brown shell for the cowl, were really

works of art. And . . . animals discovered in the fairy-tale writer a patron, a seer, who could understand, and therefore love, them. He liked to have cats and dogs about him. When he went for contemplative walks under the old church limes at Lensahn and talked to the wise-looking and comfortably purring cats, one might have been witnessing a pretty fairy scene. Very touching was his appreciation of his own little dog's faithfulness. This creature, a neat little deerhound, had an almost human intelligence; and he was certainly taught as perhaps few animals are taught. . . . Unfortunately he did not fulfil his real practical purpose. He should have given the doctor grounds to go out. But Stinde was satisfied in Berlin with a beautiful balcony, on which grew all kinds of flowers, and where two tortoises passed their phlegmatic existence."

Latterly Stinde was more occupied with scientific research than writing; but he liked to know all that was going on and could be enthusiastic in praise. His method of reading the papers was peculiar, for he would sit at the harmonium, with these spread open on the music rest, so that while his thoughts were immersed in chemistry or medicine, his favourite subjects, his fingers were softly wandering over the keys.

He died in 1905 at the age of sixty-four.

III

It was indignation, always a strong motive with her, that drove Frau Buchholz to write her first letter to the press.

The historic missive which was to lead to such unsuspected results of popularity and to be the parent of such a notable and immense epistolatory progeny, running to five or six volumes, began thus:

“I am an unpretending woman, Mr. Editor, and writing is certainly not my strong point, but as your paper—which I am so fond of reading—sometimes discusses things which can only be properly understood and spoken of by women, I take the liberty, as an anxious mother, to pour out my heart to you, and beg you, when my style needs touching up, kindly to put it to rights. It would be painful to me if my daughters were to discover faults in my writing; such a thing would rob me of the authority I have hitherto exercised over them. You cannot imagine what an amount children learn at school nowadays!”

The grievance was then described: nothing less than the laxity which led publishers and booksellers to circulate, as “plays for children,” dramas that touched too freely upon love and lovers.

Before plunging into the story proper, I should

like to make a little diversion, which not only embraces a period in the Buchholzes' life anterior to the real drama, but shows us Dr. Stinde and the Frau in company. For this purpose we must look for a moment at the volume entitled *The Buchholzes in Italy*, from which I take nothing for the body of this book, for the principal reason that, though written after the first part, the author antedates the travelling experiences to a time before Betti and Emmi were marriageable and therefore interesting. Nor does one quite believe in Frau Buchholz as a tourist. She was too thrifty, one feels, ever really to have consented to the trip at all, the origin of which no doubt was the circumstance that Dr. Stinde himself, having just been in Italy, wished, like a prudent journalist, to make use of his experiences.

According to the story, Herr Buchholz, having contracted rheumatic trouble, was ordered south, and Frau Buchholz agreed to accompany him. Her brother, Uncle Fritz, went too, with an eye to his business; but precisely what his business was I have not been able to discover. Like Carl's it had to do with clothing. There are some pleasant touches in the book. Thus, at the beginning:

"We now divided the preparations amongst us. Uncle Fritz had to occupy himself with the route,
[28]

to attend to the guide-books, and to inquire from people who had already been in Italy the best way to set about the thing. All matters of equipment devolved on me, and my Carl, poor rheumatic creature, was obliged to turn his attention to Italian, as he could not trouble himself about other matters on account of his suffering condition. It was a touching picture as the patient soul sat by the stove and instructed himself in the strange tongue. By the end of a week, however, he thought that he could find his way along, and on the day of departure he said: 'Italian gives me no further trouble.' This made me at once proud and happy."

The route as arranged by Uncle Fritz lay through Verona, Milan, Genoa, the Riviera di Levante (so dear to Germans ever since the Emperor Frederick occupied Lord Carnarvon's villa near Santa Margherita), Pisa, Rome, Naples, Florence and Venice.

At Pisa Frau Buchholz became peculiarly herself:—"As singing was still going on in the cathedral, the leaning tower took its turn of inspection. Uncle Fritz suggested ascending it. 'That rickety thing?' I exclaimed in horror. 'Why, it might tumble down at any moment. Carl, you stay below!' But of what avail are any prayers when men have got a mad freak into their heads? else they would not bet that they could drink twenty drams of pep-

permint, or could trot to Charlottenberg, and be a corpse two days later. It was just the same here, for my Carl naturally wished to ascend the tower. As, however, three people must be together, in order that two may hold one at the top in the event of a desire to spring over seizing him, I thought that my refusal would be an inhibition on the ascent, but I had not taken the mob into account, for some one of the beggars risks his life for a couple of coppers, and joins the party if a third is wanting.

“My Carl really went and I stayed behind. ‘Supposing the tower falls when Carl is at the top,’ it flashed through me, ‘it must tilt over, it leans too much to one side not to do that, for how many a new building tumbles about one’s ears when it has barely been finished, while this tower has stood for who knows how long, and is only prevented by age from remaining upright! What shall I do with the unhappy children if it buries their father and supporter under its ruins, and I remain alone in the world, a widow flung from place to place?’ The longer I looked at the tower the more crooked it appeared, and the greater became my fear. I shut my eyes not to get giddy, and implored in anguish of heart: ‘Thou God in high Heaven, only let the tower remain standing until my angel Carl is once more

at the bottom; I will willingly forgive all Frau Bergfeldt's injuries, although she always begins and I never retort by wishing her evil. Let the unalterable happen later. Preserve us from sudden death, storms, fire, danger by water, from famine, pestilence and war, and wrest its victory from hell. Amen!" "

At this moment a member of the Misericordia touched Frau Buchholz on the arm, plunging her into new and more immediate fears, for his costume was terrifying. The result was that "when my Carl found himself once more on level ground, I embraced him with a violence that amazed him as much as did the flood of tears that I was no longer able to control, but as my broken descriptions of what had happened did not enable him to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, he could find no sufficient explanation of my behaviour. I, however, was comforted by the fact that I held him in my arms not dashed to pieces, and so I soon wept myself out."

But the interesting thing to us about *The Buchholzes in Italy* is that at the foot of Vesuvius Frau Buchholz met Dr. Stinde, and with him his artist friend Professor Paulsen, who afterwards was to paint her portrait. I quote the major part of her conversation with these eminent men.

"Dr. Stinde knew me and I knew him by name, as we both occasionally write for Schorer's 'Family Journal,' which may be had in Naples too. Here were two people living in one and the same town and meeting for the first time at the foot of Vesuvius. Berlin really is too cosmopolitan.

"I said to him instantly: 'Doctor, you must teach me now, for I intend writing a book on Italy, and if I could import into it a dash of science, it would be enormously useful; you would hardly believe what a fashion science is nowadays.'

"The doctor regretted that he had not his books with him, and so was unable to comply with my request, but I did not slacken my hold of him and asked if he liked roast goose. After he had given an affirmative answer to this with a delicate smile, I said, 'Next autumn I will invite you to dine off a roast goose, such as Frau Buchholz cooks; you will come, I hope?'—'Goose? . . . Oh, certainly!'—'Good, then; just bring your books with you, we can see to the rest when the things are removed.'—For everything depends on the manner in which we treat people.*

"I knew beforehand that the doctor would not be sufficiently impolite to meet me with a refusal, for I have never seen from his pen any of those social castigations, chastising his surroundings in the public papers, for impolite behaviour. I could

* Indeed, the goose was excellent, for Frau Buchholz sprinkles the roast with cold water as soon as it begins to brown, by which the skin acquires an ideal crackliness.—STINDE'S NOTE.

therefore take a certain amount of politeness for granted. . . .

"A white horse with a sidesaddle had been reserved for me. To tell the truth, I had never been in a saddle since I used to have penny donkey rides as a child at the Griebenows, and would therefore gladly have given up the expedition; but the fear that the doctor might put me into the papers, and that Frau Bergfeldt might hear of my cowardice, was greater than my nervousness; I would prefer breaking my neck to that!

"I must confess that I arrived in the saddle better than I expected, but when I was comfortably settled it turned out that my steed was not like-minded with myself. Instead of going to the right it took the left, went backwards instead of forwards, as if its forelegs had been fastened on behind, until, to the delight of the spectators, it squeezed me against a garden wall, which was all the more unpleasant as I was not wearing a proper riding habit.

" 'Do consider that the nag is not your Carl,' Uncle Fritz called out to me, 'and leave it more liberty.' Unfortunately my position was too critical to allow of my answering him with becoming scorn. . . ."

All rode up the volcano together, for it was before the days of the funicular railway.

"When body and soul had been restored once more to their normal relations by means of food and drink,

we exercised our gymnastic powers in crossing the sulphureous crevasses, and ascended the cone of eruption. We were certainly standing immediately beside the smoke and hole, but it was impossible to distinguish anything accurately amid the fumes. Even the doctor was just as wise after he had looked down as he was before, and thought that vulcanism was still as ever an unsolved riddle. I must acknowledge that this decision caused my faith in science to be considerably shaken, for if it does not know what happens to Vesuvius, which is visible to its eyes, what can it know of things that happened on earth millions of years ago, when it was not present, although it says such and such things have been? In saying this, however, I must not be understood as throwing stones at science generally, for did it not exist there would be neither aniline dyes nor salicylic acid, and what would our existence be like without these two things? A colourless, unhealthy Nothing! No, justice remains justice; science is not without its deserts.

"I expounded this idea to the doctor, and asked him whether his love of investigation was not sufficiently great to make him find a pleasure in being let down into the crater by means of an iron chain, to which he answered quite dryly, 'No.' If, however, it had to be done, he would only undertake it in my company.

"'Doctor!' I exclaimed in horror, 'how can you demand that I should be burnt to death alive in that flaming cauldron?'—'Well,' he answered, looking

dreadfully innocent, 'I thought you took such a deep interest in science that you would not mind running the risk of a few square feet of blister!'—'What are you thinking about?' answered I. 'Surely science exists principally for the entertainment of us ladies, and to make the terrestrial globe to some extent interesting to us!'

"The doctor put on a still more innocent look, and then said, after a pause: 'You are right, science is scarcely to be distinguished from amusement nowadays, but that does not make it incumbent on learned men to stake their lives as unnecessarily as their reputation.' I must acknowledge that I did not quite understand what the doctor intended to convey, but I assume with confidence that it was a piece of spitefulness.*

"However, I saw no occasion to involve myself in a discussion amid these smoky surroundings; when volcanoes speak, man must be silent. Besides, the mountain was conducting itself in a highly uncomfortable manner, with all its noise; but as it is, so to speak, a Neapolitan child, one cannot well demand quiet, well-bred behaviour of it. The doctor also had the kindness to inform me that on the occasion of the eruption of Vesuvius on April 26, 1872, a fissure had opened suddenly on the side of the cone, and a number of visitors wishing to see the spectacle from close at hand, had been burnt to death by the lava, a story that caused my feeling of security,

* I am never spiteful.—STINDE'S NOTE.

which was sufficiently wavering without it, to sink considerably. The small stones which were falling down from high above us, some of which indeed touched us, the heated surface and the fumes of sulphur soon drove us away, but before we left I cried: 'Gentlemen, please allow me one moment longer. Do you see these skat cards, which I have sworn to send to the place where they belong—to hell?' At the word 'hell' I flung the pack of cards, which I had secretly abducted from Uncle Fritz, into the smoking abyss. Uncle Fritz exclaimed in anger, 'Wilhelmine, you are——,' but he got no farther, for at the same moment there was such an unprecedentedly violent uproar in the interior of the crater, that the ground trembled beneath our feet, and we were overwhelmed by a hail of fairly sized fragments. I took nimbly to my heels and made sure that I got down, for I believed that the mountain was about to open up again, and get me into the flaming lava. My knees were tottering for a long time afterwards. In what direction Vesuvius vomited the four knaves is a problem that, like vulcanism, will probably remain insoluble for ever. . . .

"It was not until we were seated at a well-laid table in the restaurant of Vermouth di Torino at Naples, nor till the artist Paulsen had ordered a bottle of Chianti, containing at least five litres, that the consciousness of our humanity was borne in upon us. My Carl dined off a roast quail served on a risotto. I asked: 'How does it taste?' He answered:

‘The most miserable creature could eat it.’ Then I ordered one for myself.

“As the professor and the doctor intended taking boat across to Capri the next morning, and as it was of consequence to me to induce the latter to edit my book, I said that we intended doing the same. Hereupon we discoursed much of science and art. . . .

“Of course Uncle Fritz disturbed the conversation, for he had gone off to a shop and bought a fresh pack of cards.”

And now for the domestic adventures of the Buchholz Family. The Landsbergerstrasse, where they lived, is, I should say, in north-eastern Berlin, running from the Alexander Platz to the Friedrichsbain; and every house in it was, in the eighteen seventies and eighties, the home of a middle-class German family of which the Buchholzes were a type: Herr Carl Buchholz, who, in addition to his business by day, had, as a vestryman, certain municipal duties which perhaps lifted him a shade above most of his neighbours, but being a modest, self-contained and just man he would never have claimed the superiority; Frau Wilhelmine Buchholz, née Fabian; and their two daughters Betti and Emmi. That was the family; but Frau Buchholz’s brother Fritz, a jocular convivial man about town, must be added to it. It is with these five persons and certain of their friends and acquaintances that the book

is concerned. The writer nominally is Frau Buchholz herself, and for the greater part Dr. Stinde maintained with success the illusion of feminine authorship; but now and then one is conscious of a turn of thought of which she would not have been likely or even capable, while it is doubtful if she would have given herself away in print quite as often as the humorous necessities of the book demand. But taken as a whole the work is a great feat of impersonation, and it reveals in its author a mind conspicuous for sagacity and human sympathy.

Spring, 1916.

E. V. L.

CHAPTER I

A YOUNG COUPLE GIVE A BETROTHAL PARTY AND FRAU BUCHHOLZ'S THOUGHTS ARE TURNED TO MATCH-MAKING

The book proper begins here, with the account of the visit to Bilse's concert room; because it is here that we have the first hint that Frau Buchholz's daughters Emmi and Betti are marriageable, and the true theme of the work is marriage. Let us therefore take that as our start.

Here we meet also Frau Bergfeldt, who is to remain a thorn in the side of Frau Buchholz throughout the whole work.

YOU must now allow me to tell you of a surprise I had the other day. Well, I was sitting thinking absolutely about nothing, when the house-bell rang and the postman came in and handed me a money order. At first I wouldn't believe the order was for me, but I was obliged to sign the paper, and the man then put down the gold pieces on the

table and went away. I found out that the money came as a payment for the letter I had written to you. Now really I had never expected such a thing, and then what an amount! I was quite overcome, and could not help crying, and the girls cried too. The money lay there on the table; it seemed to me as though it might vanish any moment if I touched it, and I could have fancied that the postman had been a spirit from fairyland, had he not left pretty visible signs of his footmarks on the floor.

My husband said to me: "Wilhelmine, I am really proud of you, for you have earned all that as an authoress!" "Carl," said I to him, "I have perhaps sometimes been a little hard upon you, but it shall never happen again; no, certainly never again, dear." He threw his arms round me and kissed me, and I could not help beginning to cry again. Emmi and Betti clung about me, seeing me still unconsoled, and dried their own tears. "Now, have done, children," I said coaxingly, "it's only joy that's making me cry." I could not help thinking, "If only Frau Heimreich could see all this, how envious she would be!"

"What shall you do with all that money, Wilhelmine?" said my husband. "I shall keep it as an everlasting remembrance," I replied, "or if it can't be otherwise, I shall buy myself a new bonnet; my old one is altogether out of fashion. Frau Krause

has just bought herself a new one." The children thought it best I should buy a new bonnet, so I gave in to their clamouring, and we all three went straight off to our bonnet shop. But as there was a nice bit of money over, I said to them: "With this we will all go and spend a happy day together somewhere. What do you say to going to Bilse's concert-room? I will put on my new bonnet, and father shall come and fetch us home!"

The children's delight knew no bounds, and on our way home we turned in at the confectioner's and had chocolate with whipped cream on the top, and also something good to nibble at. It was delicious!

In the evening we set out early so as to get good places at Bilse's. When we entered the hall, I saw a friend of mine sitting at one of the tables. We exchanged salutations and I said: "Good-evening, Frau Bergfeldt, I am glad that we should have met. How Augusta has grown since I last saw her!" Frau Bergfeldt clearly thought too that her daughter had improved. I soon saw, however, that it was only her dress that made Augusta seem to have grown; it was made in the latest fashion with a train and cuirass bodice, and her hair was combed down over her forehead like a pony's mane. In *my* daughter I would not have put up with such things, although Betti would have looked quite as well in

that style of dress. Augusta has been confirmed two years ago, it is true, but is nevertheless still so thin and awkward, it seems a crying shame to dress her like a grown-up person. Girls that have such skinny elbows had certainly better wear long sleeves.

We took seats at their table, but when Emmi was about to sit down beside Augusta, Frau Bergfeldt said the chair was engaged, as Emil was coming later. I said: "But there are two empty chairs, surely Emil can't want more than one!" Whereupon she replied, somewhat embarrassed, that Emil was going to bring a friend with him. "Aha," thought I to myself, "there's something in the wind here. I shall watch."

And not long afterwards Emil did come sure enough and with him a friend, who, as I gathered later, is a law-student like Emil, and had still a couple of years' study before him. Just as I had expected, the friend sat down on the chair beside Augusta, who coloured up to her eyes and behaved more awkwardly even than she had done before. Emil took his seat beside Betti, and thus our table was full.

The concert began, and the musicians had scarcely begun to play when Frau Bergfeldt drew a stocking out of her pocket, and began knitting so busily one would have thought she meant to earn back the money she had paid for her entrance. While the

music was slow and solemn she knitted away quietly, but when a valse struck up, the rhythm seemed to get into her fingers and she let so many stitches drop that Augusta had afterwards to undo all she had done; this explained to me why the knitted part had lost its whiteness.

No one can be more in favour of industry at home than I am, for I detest to see folks idle; but when one goes to a concert to improve one's mind, it is ridiculous to try to divide one's attention between a symphony and a stocking. Moreover, I don't believe that Beethoven wrote those heavenly compositions of his, simply that people might knit while they were being played. And how grand those symphonies are! When everybody sits there as if plunged four cellar-stairs deep in thought, one fancies that nothing could rouse them up but a good sousing with cold water. But that's the power of music!

Between the parts we chatted away pleasantly. Emil began an interesting conversation with Betti about German literature, and as she had only shortly before been reading one of Marlitt's novels, she had something to say for herself. She thought too that Marlitt described her characters splendidly, and considered it perfectly right that the baron was shot, and that the brave and manly engineer should marry the countess. When children have been taught some-

thing, they can afterwards put in a word themselves nicely.

Augusta Bergfeldt and the law-student scarcely uttered a syllable, but every now and again they looked sideways at each other in a loving way, and that language was plain enough. Frau Bergfeldt pretended that she did not notice anything; she always addressed the young man as "dear Herr Weigelt," and asked him what he was doing, how his parents were, and why he did not wear the mittens which Augusta had worked for him. "You no doubt want to keep the young man warm by giving him mittens as a present," I whispered to her, without meaning any mischief by the joke. But she cast a spiteful glance at my new bonnet and said: "We go in more for what is useful, not for flimsiness and trumpery." I was speechless! To have my new bonnet called trumpery! If I had borrowed it, or had tormented Carl for the money for it, it might have been a different matter. When I had recovered myself, I replied: "When a husband has to earn all the money by himself, it is wrong for a wife to follow the fashions too much." That was a pretty good hit at her!

During the second part we ate the cakes I had brought with me; the two young gentlemen lit their cigars, and the more beautiful the music became, the closer drew the chairs of Augusta and young Wei-

gelt. I did not say anything further, but noticed that when the band played a pot-pourri of very affecting music bringing in the air "Oh, that thou wert my own," the two were sitting hand in hand, looking at each other sentimentally.

The concert at last came to an end; Carl and Herr Bergfeldt were waiting for us at the entrance, and we then proceeded to a restaurant, where we engaged a room for ourselves, to be more comfortable. Carl had told Herr Bergfeldt how I had got my new bonnet, and he congratulated me and said that he now classed me among German authoresses. His wife, however, remarked—and I am sure she spoke out of pure envy—"that ladies who took to their pen never troubled themselves much about domestic matters."—"Indeed," said I; "at all events, I trouble myself more about my girls than you do about yours. I should never allow one of mine to go flirting with a student as your Augusta does." I can tell you, my words fell like a bomb among them, and made Herr Bergfeldt exclaim: "What's that you say? Herr Weigelt, I trust you are not . . ." "Oh, Goodness, papa!" cried Augusta. "Franz means it all in earnest!" exclaimed Frau Bergfeldt. "Who's Franz?" asked the father vehemently. "It's Herr Weigelt," replied his wife. "He loves Augusta faithfully and deeply. . . ."

"I must beg a word with you, sir, about all this,"

said Herr Bergfeldt, addressing young Weigelt, who stood there with a face the colour of confiscated milk; and, my Goodness, how he did quake! Just like one of those new-fangled electric bells. One really could not help pitying him.

"Who are you?" inquired the father.—"I'm a law-student," he replied.—"Where did you become acquainted with my daughter?"—"At Bilde's concert-room."—"And they are so much in love with each other!" exclaimed Frau Bergfeldt.—"Oh, we are, Papa!" cried Augusta in tears.—"But you are too young a fellow to think of marrying, and a father is not likely to give away his daughter so long beforehand."—"Oh, Papa, you will break my heart!" sobbed Augusta; "Franz is so good!"—"Do you wish to make our child unhappy?" put in the mother.

Young Weigelt stood before the father like a criminal awaiting his sentence, and didn't seem able to utter a word. "Will you promise to consider my child's happiness?" said Herr Bergfeldt, addressing him. "Will you promise me to be industrious, to pass your examinations, to live steadily, and to—oh, my child, my eldest, my firstborn . . . !" He could not go on, and Augusta too was dissolved in tears, and when the mother then quickly placed the young people's hands in one another and said "Bless you, my children," they were both in tears. And indeed

it was a very affecting moment. My own eyes were full of tears, still I could not help quietly saying to myself that the engagement had, at any rate, been far too hastily made. He can't keep himself yet; and she with her skinny elbows—he will be astonished when he sees them!

Although the Bergfeldts have not acted very kindly towards me, still I congratulated them, and said I hoped they would not need to repent having betrothed their girl so early to so young a man. That he was young could be seen at once, from the small crop of hair on his face. I, for one, should never have cared to have had him as a son-in-law. Surely outward appearance goes for something, why else should I have cared to buy a new bonnet?

Well, the betrothal was celebrated in all quietness, and we determined not to mention a syllable about it, till young Weigelt had passed his examinations. Yet how can an engagement be kept quiet? First of all the washerwoman gets to hear of it, and before a week is out the news has spread round the whole circle of one's acquaintance; that I know by experience, for it was the same when I was engaged to Carl—my father wished to keep it secret, but my mother could not keep quiet about it.

Herr Bergfeldt was more silent than usual, and kept rolling up his bread-crumbs into little balls; his wife, however, put on as beaming a face as pos-

sible. And I will not deny that to have a newly-engaged daughter may well fill a mother's heart with pride and pleasure, yet surely only when one can make some show of the lover, and also when he has not, as it were, been dragged on by the hair of his head, but merely followed the gentle promptings of love.

Owing to Herr Bergfeldt being very monosyllabic, we did not stay long. He found fault with everything, even with what pleased us. This behaviour of his made upon the attendants the impression that we were very genteel folks, and this was one good thing. On our way home I asked Carl if he had not noticed that young Weigelt had a very dazed kind of look, that is to say, looked as if he himself had fancied the engagement had been hurried on a little too quickly. Carl thought the young fellow must be a ninny, otherwise he would not have allowed himself to be so bamboozled; for it was quite clear that the mother had managed the matter, and that she had taken the girl to Bilse's in order to show her off, not for the music. He added that he wouldn't like me to take our girls to such places without him.

I replied that he might depend upon *me*, that I would take care that our girls did not become engaged like that, and that *I* knew how to keep off young fellows without any prospects. We went on talking, for one word led to another, and there was

no peace till Carl stopped speaking; this he always does when we don't agree, and it vexes me all the more, for I never know what he may be *thinking* to himself. It is a difficult thing to deal with men.

When we got home, Betti asked when we should be going to Bilse's concert-room again, whereupon her father said: "Not for a long time to come." Betti looked very disappointed and muttered something about having promised Emil Bergfeldt to be there next Thursday.

This was a pretty bit of news for me! But I set to at once and gave them all a pretty talking to, which they richly deserved: Carl, because he had not been with us; Betti, because she had been making plans with Emil without my knowledge; and Emmi, because she ought to have heard, and to have told me what the two were planning. We were an ill-humoured company, and the day which had begun so delightfully ended in vexation and annoyance.

When I was alone with Carl I said to him: "We must look well after our girls, for such engagements as we have seen to-day must surely never be heard of in *our* family!" Carl thought that if mothers would only be sensible, such ridiculous proceedings would never happen, even though young people looked at each other ever so kindly, and the music were ever so sentimental. But I should like to know how much men understand about such things?

It is quite possible that Emil Bergfeldt may have finished his law studies in a couple of years, and Betti is ten times as pretty as that skinny Augusta who was now engaged. And as to the music, the band at Bilse's plays splendidly, all but the drummer, who bangs away at his instrument as if he wanted to smash it, and it wouldn't be smashed. Why should one not go to the concerts oftener? It cannot be denied that he is a fine-looking young fellow, and would look specially well in a sergeant's uniform, if not a lieutenant's.

CHAPTER II

VISITING THE EXHIBITION, WE MEET DR. WRENZ-
CHEN, AND HERR BUCHHOLZ EXCEEDS

I WILL not trouble you with a description of the Exhibition, I should really need to be a professional writer for that; so I will only remark that the impression made upon me, as well as upon the children, was an overpowering one. Carl, who had been to see it several times, struck me as rather indifferent to its splendour, both generally and in detail.

It was a very hot day, so Carl offered to let us have some little refreshment at the Moabite beer-house, and we did not say nay to that. Carl went to fetch the beer himself, and walked straight up to a fat Bavarian who was drawing the stuff from a gigantic barrel. I thought to myself how gallant and good that Carl of mine is, what a truly admirable husband, when my eyes caught sight of a Munich barmaid, in her gay, fantastic costume, who was

handing him the change and smiling at him as if he were an old acquaintance.

That smile struck me to the heart, but not a word did I say; in my own mind, however, I resolved never to let him go to the Exhibition again alone—most firmly did I vow that to myself!

The beer tasted like wormwood to me, which cannot be wondered at considering the circumstances. I could not drink it, and so gave it to the children that it might not be wasted.

Carl said to me: "You do not seem to like the beer, Wilhelmine; shall we try some lighter kind?"—"The sun is too hot here," I replied, casting a glance at the barmaid, but Carl did not or would not understand what I meant. "Very well, let us go to the Bohemian brewery," was his answer. I was glad to get away, and we sauntered along to the Bohemian bar. There, to our great joy, we met not only Uncle Fritz, but also Dr. Wrenzchen, the doctor who had attended me when Frau Bergfeldt's shameful behaviour threw me upon my sick-bed. It was very pleasant meeting him, for, to a patient, a doctor does always seem a kind of supernatural being, a very angel of comfort, especially when he is kind and gentle, and knows how to cheer up a suffering fellow-creature with a neat little joke every now and again. Well, we soon got chatting very pleasantly. Carl and Fritz meanwhile began dis-

cussing which was the best beer, my husband having said that I seemed to prefer the Bohemian to the Moabite. But then he didn't know what good reasons I had for liking it best.

The one declared this, the other that, so, as they couldn't agree, Uncle Fritz was wicked enough to propose a beer wager, which Carl took up, in spite of a significant cough from me, though the doctor kept out of it. I then remarked that it was high time we saw something of the Exhibition. Carl, however, declared that he must go the round of the beers with Fritz so as to settle the wager, and that therefore I had better go alone with the children. He further said that he and Fritz would meet us in the Old German wine-room at five o'clock. The doctor offered to accompany me and the girls, for, as he said, he was just then taking Marienbad waters at home for his stoutness, and therefore, would have to forego the pleasure of the beer-tasting trip. Carl put on a face as innocent as if he had only just been confirmed.

I saw through him, however, although I said nothing at the time, for I did not want the doctor to notice that our domestic happiness was disturbed and likely to collapse altogether; moreover, Betti had taken rather a fancy to him, and Emil Bergfeldt is after all no proper match for her. That letter of his mother's and the broken stew-pan were enough

to separate us for ever from that family. And then, a doctor in the family would be so very convenient; he could not, of course, charge his relatives for every little, trifling bit of advice. All I said to Carl on parting was: "Now, Carl, remember and keep to one sort; you know you can't stand taking a lot of different kinds."

The doctor then led us through the Exhibition. It was really wonderful how he explained everything. Betti was quite overcome with amazement, in fact I had more than once to whisper to her: "Don't stand with your mouth wide open like that, you look too ridiculous." When passing the furnished rooms, I made the remark that middle-class folk could never afford such luxuries, whereupon the good doctor said: "The smallest of rooms is big enough for a happy, loving couple!"—"Do you hear, Betti," said I, "what excellent ideas the doctor has about life?" But instead of making any sensible reply—and yet we subscribe to the 'Gartenlaube' magazine—she suddenly shut her mouth with a click, for it was open again, and my speaking to her made her think that I was again about to give her a motherly rebuke. To make up for the girl's stupidity, I said knowingly: "Betti is so overcome by all these productions of the busy human mind in industry and art, that she did not hear your excellent remark, dear Doctor."

"Don't mention it, madam," said he, kind as ever;

"it's only external." I tapped him gently on the arm with my fan, which served me in place of a parasol that day, and tried to take up the thread of our conversation again by saying: "Quite right, Doctor; the main thing is, after all, that there should be a harmony of hearts." He looked at me sideways a little, and seemed to wink with his one eye, and I was just about telling him what Betti would have at her marriage, and that there would be something more when we came into the money which my aunt in Bützow was to leave us, when Emmi all of a sudden exclaimed aloud: "Oh, look, Mamma, how bright that bath is, and water is actually running into it!"

Although she is my own flesh and blood, I could at that moment have done her some injury, for that senseless exclamation put an untimely end to a conversation upon which her sister's happiness depended. How pleasant it would have been had Betti and the doctor left the Exhibition that afternoon an engaged couple, and how it would have vexed the Bergfeldts. For if a doctor with a practice were to be weighed against an ill-fed law-student, the latter would prove by far the lighter of the two surely. But now the conversation was broken off once and for ever, and could not be taken up again; in face of a bath, love-affairs could surely not be discussed, at least such a thing would go against my feelings.

The right moment was clearly lost. I cannot, of course, get ill again simply to have the doctor about me, and he is not likely to come of his own accord. All I could now do was to count upon the walk home.

The doctor looked at his watch and said it was time to go to the wine-room, where we had appointed to meet my husband and Uncle Fritz, and so away we went. But, oh, that bath! I gave it such a look at parting that verily it would have blistered had it not been of the best workmanship; might it not be said that in it lay buried the happiness of my eldest child!

We had to pass through the spirit department, where the exhibitors invited us most pressingly to taste their samples free of charge, and the doctor actually induced us to try a little of one of the ladies' liqueurs. Just as I was about to express my thanks for this civility, I caught sight of Carl, who was having some stuff poured out for him and seemed to be tasting several kinds of brandy. I went up to him and said: "Carl, do you call this waiting for us?" "Well, well," he said, and laughed, "that at the Moabite is the best after all."—"Have you been there again?" I asked. "Of course, my darling," said he, chucking me under the chin.—"Carl," said I severely, "you have been drinking too many sorts."—"I've not had enough yet though," said he cheerily.—"Where is Uncle Fritz?"—"Oh, the muff! He

wouldn't even come to the liqueurs. I haven't a notion where he is."

"Doctor," said I, "do take my husband by the arm, so that the children may not notice anything; he has but a poor stomach."

"Oh, it's only external," replied the doctor, taking hold of Carl and drawing him away.

It was most kind of Dr. Wrenzchen taking so much trouble with my husband, and trying to make him take some interest in the Exhibition, in spite of Carl always wanting to get back to the liqueur-stall and maintaining that he had not tried all the different sorts. However, the doctor held him firmly by the arm, and when we were passing the surgical department which was close to the liqueurs, he began telling him what all the different knives and saws, the cauterisers and probes were used for, and also made him look at the artificial legs and arms.

"Oh, how much misery there is in the world!" exclaimed Carl. "Unhappy mortals! Children, thank Heaven your limbs are sound. Ah, poor suffering humanity, what an amount of misery this makes one think of!"

As he was lamenting thus, some one at the moment struck up on the organ close by *Dies ist der Tag des Herrn*. This brought things to a climax. Carl's feeling so overcame him that he began to sob violently, and kept exclaiming—"Children, thank

Heaven! Yes, we need all do that!" And with this he sank down on a chair crying bitterly.

When the children heard and saw all this they were frightened and horror-struck. "Oh, Goodness! what is the matter with papa," shrieked Emmi. "Oh, Papa, dear Papa!" cried Betti. People gathered round us, and among the crowd whom should I see but Frau Bergfeldt with Augusta, and that gaunt, miserable-looking student of hers! I felt as if the heavens were coming down upon me. "Children," I cried, "stand in front of your father; this is no sight for persons without feeling and culture."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said good Dr. Wrenzen, "I beg you to move on—this gentleman is feeling a little ill from the great heat; he will soon be all right again." And the people did move away, only the woman Bergfeldt kept standing where she was. "Heat?" she called out in a scoffing tone of voice, "it's more likely he hasn't had anything proper to eat; when a wife takes to writing, the husband has to suffer for it. Come, Augusta and Franz, we are to have chicken and asparagus for supper this evening." I was speechless. The Bergfeldts with asparagus! Good heavens! a few heads, maybe, as a treat at Whitsuntide, but only then surely! Asparagus? I would have liked to choke her with that lump of cyanide of potassium which we had just been admiring, because, as we were told, it was strong enough to

poison all the inhabitants of Berlin, Charlottenburg and Rixdorf put together—yes, at that moment I would willingly have stuffed it down her throat. The organ meanwhile was playing away, and Carl jabbering on about the miseries of poor, suffering humanity.

When he became a little more pacified I drove him home; the girls remained with the doctor for the concert. At first I did not wish to accept his offer to be their cavalier, but I gave in, especially as he seemed to wink at me in rather a knowing way. When we got home I gave Carl a pretty talking to, and he was quite crestfallen. “Dearest Wilhelmine, I will never again touch a liqueur.” “And will you never again allow yourself to be tempted by Fritz to go in for a beer wager?”—“No.”—“And never again go flirting with that Bavarian barmaid?”—“Now, Mina dear.”—“Well then, with no barmaid whatever?”—“How can you say such things?”—“And will you go and inform against that Frau Bergfeldt for her insulting language to me?”—“I will do anything and everything you wish, dear, but cannot do as you wish about Frau Bergfeldt.”—“So you mean to allow her to go on at me like a rattlesnake?”—“There is nothing to accuse her of.”

I saw clearly there was something wrong and therefore said: “Carl, do tell me what all this means, for my happiness and that of our children is

at stake. What is it that Frau Bergfeldt knows about you?"

When I had got him meek enough, he made his confession; it was this:—Once, long ago, when he and Bergfeldt were still young fellows and full of youthful spirits, they had celebrated a birthday together, and at night had kicked up a row with one of the watchmen, which ended in their both being carried off to the guardhouse; unfortunately, as it was late on a Saturday night, they had to remain there till Monday morning.—“Is that all,” said I, “and she fancies she could brew mischief with that! Why that’s nothing at all, Carl; to my mind it needs a good bit of courage to attack a watchman, and in courage you’ve never been wanting. It’s only drinking different sorts of things together that you can’t stand.” He then promised me to be careful in future, and I know him well enough to know that he will keep his word.

The girls did not return till Carl was in bed, for he had retired earlier than usual. When they came in I asked them how they had enjoyed themselves. “Very much,” said Emmi; “and the doctor kept winking with one eye all the time.”

“Did he really, Betti, my darling child?”

“Yes, Mamma, the whole evening.”

“And what did he say to you?” I asked, full of curiosity.

“He said that he was probably getting a sty in his eye,” cried Emmi; “and that he had felt it all the afternoon.”

“Well, well,” said I, “a doctor must know that best.” Later in the evening I learned that it was Fritz who had played the organ at the Exhibition, that so upset Carl. He got it pretty hotly from me for his trouble!

CHAPTER III

HERR BUCHHOLZ HAS TOOTHACHE AND TRIES TOO MANY REMEDIES

A WEEK ago we celebrated our wedding-day—it was one of the most abominable days I ever remember. This anniversary to me, otherwise, is the happiest fête of all the year, more than Easter or Whitsuntide put together, for it is my special day, and moreover Carl is the patron saint of the day. It might be asked why the day isn't a special day for Carl as well. Of course it may be, but then, how can I tell whether I have made him as happy as he has made me? I can only hope I have; yet I cannot imagine that any mortal soul could ever have been as happy as I was that first wedding-day when he gave me his name, and before God and all the people in the church proclaimed his love for me aloud and publicly. I remember I couldn't get that one word "yes" to cross my lips; I felt frightened at

seeing the great number of people, and yet I could have shouted for joy.

So when our wedding-day comes round, that first day rises up vividly in my remembrance as if it had only been yesterday; and when Carl embraces me, with never a word, and gives me a kiss, I feel as if he were still my bridegroom, with the sprig of myrtle in his buttonhole, a white necktie, and beautifully dressed hair; yet nowadays I have him only in a dressing-gown, and his hair is apt to be tousled early of a morning.

In the evening we always have a small gathering of friends and acquaintances, and something extra good for supper. Carl is not one to despise his food, and I'm glad when he finds things tasty. On this particular occasion he hardly touched anything, and I was uneasy about him.

"Is anything the matter, Carl!" I asked.

"Oh, no!" he said, but I noticed that his "oh" was drawn out half the length of the Friedrich Strasse. I begged him to tell me what ailed him, but he persistently refused to answer any questions, and, in fact, was, I may say, a little unpleasant towards me.

Our last visitors did not leave till half-past one o'clock. When we were alone I could not help complaining of his behaviour during the evening, whereupon he said that he had toothache, and hadn't been

in the humour to enjoy himself. I proposed that he should have a handkerchief tied up his head, but he ridiculed this and said the pain was not much and would probably go off by itself.

So I went into the kitchen to pay the charwoman, who generally comes in to help when we have friends. I let a word or two drop about my husband having the toothache, whereupon old Grunert—that's to say, the charwoman—said she knew of an excellent sympathetic remedy which had cured numbers of people.

I thought at once, why should we not give it a trial, for sympathy is, at all events, wonderfully cheap.

Carl pooh-poohed the idea of old Grunert's remedy, but I persuaded him to try it, as sympathy could surely do him no harm. He at last consented to let her try her hand.

Grunert knew that we had an elder-tree in the garden that would suit her purpose, so she went out quietly and cut a small piece off one of the branches; on returning she poked this bit of wood round and round in Carl's decayed tooth till it bled. All this was done without a word being spoken. Then she went out again to the tree and tied the bit of wood with a linen thread on to the place from which she had cut it, and then came in and asked if the pain had gone.

“Is that what you expected?” exclaimed Carl, annoyed. “My tooth aches much worse since you worried it with that bit of wood.” But Grunert merely said, just let him wait till the wood has grown on to the tree again, the pain will vanish in a moment. After wishing that he might very soon be better, she went away home.

Carl grumbled dreadfully about her nonsense, especially as the toothache had become more violent since the sympathetic remedy had been applied.

I suggested that he should try holding warm water in his mouth, which is said to be a good thing, and went into the kitchen to get a little heated.

“Well, ma’am,” said our cook to me, “when I’ve the toothache I use spirit of mustard-seed and rub it on my cheek; it burns a bit, but it does good.” Luckily she had a little of the spirit, which I gratefully accepted, and applied it to Carl’s cheek.

I soon wished I hadn’t, for the stuff really seemed terribly hot and strong; Carl said his face felt as if it had been painted with some hellish fire. His cheek became as red as a boiled lobster and soon afterwards got very swollen. Then, of course, he was obliged to have his head tied up, which is what ought to have been done at the outset if only he had followed my advice. But men are always so obstinate, even when things are suggested for their good.

What with the sympathetic remedy and the spirit

of mustard-seed, it was now nearly three in the morning, and we went to bed.

I cannot say I had a pleasant night, for Carl scarcely slept at all, and kept turning over and over in his bed. The next morning he certainly looked as if he might have done better.

Towards eight o'clock he fell asleep, and I began to hope that all would soon be well. At ten the Police-lieutenant's wife came in with her congratulations for our wedding-day, which she regretted came rather late. She was sincerely grieved about my husband, and said there was nothing better for toothache than genuine Chinese essence of poho. Our servant was sent out at once to fetch some. Carl had woke up meanwhile and was suffering dreadfully again. I showed him the essence we had procured, but he refused to try it.

"Carl," I said, "it would be most rude to the Police-lieutenant's wife if you were not to give the expensive stuff a trial." However, he would not listen to anything, and was very much out of temper. When I reminded him that the Chinese had proved themselves wiser than we were in many things, he at last agreed to try it, and I pushed a bit of wadding well saturated with the poho into his tooth.

It made him spit dreadfully, but the pain vanished. His eyes were full of tears from the strength of the essence, but he smiled as well as he could with

his swollen cheek. Poor Carl! How grateful I felt to the Police-lieutenant's wife no one can imagine. I and the girls accompanied her downstairs, and she herself was pleased that her advice had proved so successful. When I returned upstairs I heard poor Carl moaning again—the toothache had returned with redoubled violence.

It is a good thing to have quick-witted children. It now occurred to Betti that Herr Krause had homœopathic medicines, and often cured complaints in no time, so away she ran to ask him to look in.

Herr Krause is a teacher, and one can always rely upon such persons, for they really know everything, and lay the foundation for everything;—in fact, it is said it was they who won in the late war, although, of course, there never would have been a war but for them. Moreover, Herr Krause is specially well up in scientific matters, and has absolutely no faith whatever in medical men. And, as I said before, I myself prefer home remedies.

Herr Krause lost no time in appearing with his medicine-case and his book, for was this not a case of succouring a suffering fellow-creature, and an act of pure humanity? Carl was sitting on the sofa with his swollen cheek and was very irritable, yet, as he could only see with one eye, the other being pretty well swollen up, he looked as if he had a continual smirk on his face.

"Well, dear Buchholz," exclaimed Herr Krause, "still in good humour, in spite of your troubles, I am glad to see."

"I'm not a bit in good humour," replied Carl snappishly. "If you want to do me a favour send for a doctor."

"A doctor?" said Herr Krause, with a derisive smile. "There's is no occasion here for a doctor, I hope. Doctors do not by any means understand the secrets of nature. The main point in medicine is to *cure* diseases, and that cannot be learned by killing cats and dissecting dogs. Then think of the stuffs they make people swallow—poisons and purgatives that bring on life-long ailments. Homœopathy, on the other hand, destroys diseases in a natural way."

"I suppose with bits of wood and spirit of mustard-seed," said Carl in a provoking tone.

Herr Krause only smiled, and, by way of explaining his method, added: "The homœopathic principle is to cure by means of the spirit of medicine. Take, for instance, a bottleful of water as large as the moon, add to this one drop of medicine well shaken up with it. You will then have a homœopathic remedy."

"Goodness!" I could not help exclaiming, "but who can shake the moon?"

"I am speaking figuratively, dear Frau Buchholz," replied Herr Krause. "Now let us first of all test

your husband's symptoms so as to find the right medicine. Do you feel a burrowing pain in your tooth, Buchholz?"

"Not since that woman Grunert left," replied Carl.

"Ah! no burrowing pain, therefore. Does the pain move from left to right or from right to left?"

"It sticks where it is."

"Aha! then *pulsatilla* is the medicine! The swollen cheek indicates a chill. We shall therefore use *aconite* and *pulsatilla* alternately."

"I beg your pardon, Krause, but the swollen cheek is the result of the spirit of mustard-seed."

"Then we must first use camphor so as to drive the mustard poison from the system," replied Herr Krause.

With this he opened his medicine case and laid three small white globules on my husband's tongue and stirred other globules in a little water, saying that Carl was to sip a little of the water every hour. He further explained that the pain would at first become more violent—it being natural to get worse first, as the spirit of the medicine was warring against the spirit of the disease—but that the trouble would be relieved as if by magic shortly afterwards. He, moreover, forbade tobacco, tea, coffee, acids, spices, and especially camomile tea, which, he declared, brought on years of ill-health. He then

left. My husband took the medicines exactly as prescribed, but the toothache got worse and worse. "Thank God," I exclaimed, "the two spirits are fighting it out well; he will soon be better now!" Carl groaned so that I was truly grieved for him. He walked up and down the room, then sat down, and then again lay down on the sofa, burrowing his head right into the corner.

"I cannot stand it any longer!" he cried at last.

"Do keep quiet, Carl dearest. Did you not hear Krause say that the pain must get worse before it gets better? Take another sip of this, and let your teeth fight it out well."

We waited hour after hour, but the pain did not give way. Carl wanted to smoke, but that had been strictly forbidden. At dinner we had his favourite dish—stewed meat with vinegar sauce. This too he dared not touch. He became furious when he found that he had to be content with bread-and-milk.

Emmi suggested that Herr Krause might have driven out the spirit of mustard-seed, but that perhaps the poho essence was still at work. So she hurried off to ask him. She was away a considerable time, and when she returned said, that Herr Krause had looked up in his medical book but could not find any antidote for poho, and also said that this poison might neutralise the effect of his medicines. In that case homœopathy was simply powerless.

Carl's stock of patience was clearly coming to an end. He called Emmi a silly hen, and me a stupid goose. It was just as if he were out of his mind, and he stalked up and down the room like a tiger in its cage. I burst into tears, and Emmi cried too. "Carl," I exclaimed, "how unkind you are to us, how cruel you are, when we are doing everything we possibly can to mitigate your sufferings. You are an unnatural father to act like this towards us helpless creatures! Carl, Carl, you are behaving wickedly both to me and to your child also."

He made no answer, and when I looked up from my pocket-handkerchief, my eyes filled with tears, there I saw Carl standing on his head on the sofa with pain. This was horrible in the extreme! For surely there could be nothing more dreadful than to see the father of one's children, a vestryman and guardian, standing on his head with his heels high up above the back of the sofa? I gave a loud scream in my dismay and distress.

At that moment Fritz came in. "What sort of comedy is this?" he called out, laughing, when this picture of domestic despair met his eyes. It was with some difficulty that he was made to understand what had happened, for while our voices were choked with sobs, and Carl kept on making inarticulate noises, Fritz was nearly in a fit with laughter.

"Carl, old fellow, what have they been doing to you?" he said, at last.

"Dosing me with home remedies."

"Couldn't you have sent for Dr. Wrenzchen, Wilhelmine?" said Fritz to me.

"Who thinks of sending for a doctor the moment things go wrong?" said I. "What are home remedies for, I should like to know?"

"To plague your husband with," was his reply.

Fritz then began to scold Carl for having allowed himself to be dosed with old wife's messes (I do believe that was the vulgar expression he used), and then told him to get on his coat and to come to a dentist with him. This, he said, would be better than sending for Dr. Wrenzchen, whose business was more for internal than for external troubles.

This proposal is not what I should have liked best, for if Dr. Wrenzchen had been called in, he might have had a chat with Betti; but we women have always to give in to rude force.

Fritz drove off with Carl, and in an hour's time they returned. Carl was rid of his tooth and of the pain, and like a new-born creature; but the beginning of this new year of our marriage was not as pleasant as had always been the case before. Carl had been too hard upon me, and that I could not forgive at a moment's notice. Had we not all meant to do our best for him?

CHAPTER IV

A NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY IN THE LANDSBERGER- STRASSE, AND A (TEMPORARY) RECONCILIATION

WE have generally spent New Year's Eve turn about at each other's houses—first at the Krauses', then at the Bergfeldts', and then at our house. Last year we met at our house, so now it's the Krauses' turn again. I wonder how it will be next year when the Bergfeldts have to invite us!

Frau Bergfeldt had offended me mortally; I can't say how mortified I had been. Had she been lying at her last gasp asking me for a drop of water, I could have given her oil of vitriol instead. But no—these feelings came over me only at the first moment of my rage, and were probably the cause of my having that bilious-fever. I have got the better of them now, however, and no longer feel as bitter as I did, and am just a little ashamed that such thoughts could ever have arisen in my breast. But still I do not by any means wish to say that Frau Bergfeldt

wasn't to blame. Quite the reverse, for it was *she* who began it.

Well, and so it is the Krauses' turn!—Herr Krause came in himself to invite us, and Carl accepted the invitation without further ado. "Carl," I exclaimed a little sharply, "have you inquired whether the Bergfeldts are to be there or not?" He answered curtly: "Of course they will be there; we always meet on New Year's Eve, and it will be the same this year, I suppose." He made this remark in a more determined tone of voice than I had heard him speak for long. While he was speaking I fixed him with my eye, and although he knew quite well what my look meant he paid no heed to it whatever.

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, without adding another syllable; but there was something in that "indeed" of mine which so dismayed Carl that it was easy to see he felt dry in the mouth from fear.

"Dear Frau Buchholz," put in Herr Krause gently, "is it so very impossible then for you to be forgiving? Out in the big world there are disputes enough, and hate and dissensions crop up on all sides. Are these evil spirits to be allowed to spoil our family life, to tear asunder old bonds of friendship and to destroy the few joys that spring up from social intercourse?" I battled a little with myself and then said: "With evil spirits I will have nothing whatever to do—and as to being unsociable, no one shall

ever say that of me. Herr Krause, you have spoken beautifully, and it would be wrong of me if I didn't give way. But that Frau Bergfeldt must let me have the first word, remember. I bargain for that, or else things remain as they are."

Herr Krause said he would answer for Frau Bergfeldt doing as I wished, and so I promised to be one of the party.

Scarcely had Herr Krause left when I said to Carl: "He is certainly right; it is better to live in peace than at strife. What's the use of perpetual sulking? Our children's Christmas frocks will have to be got ready, however, and I shall wear the new locket with the large diamonds that you gave me. The Bergfeldts will have nothing to come up to that."

When the evening came, I said to my husband: "Do not let us be the first to arrive; it looks ill-bred to be very punctual."—"As you like, Wilhelmine. But remember we are not going to a formal party, we shall only be among friends." However, I insisted upon what I had said, and so we waited till the boy Krause came in and told us that everyone had come, and that the whipped cream was getting thin, and that his mother could not keep it any longer. So off we went. When we got there I let my husband lead the way; I followed in my light grey silk, a little cut out at the throat, and with my locket on;

by my side were the girls, looking very well in their Christmas dresses.

Everyone in the room rose to bid us welcome. The Krauses were very hearty, so also was Herr Bergfeldt, but that wife of his made me a bow as cold and stiff as if it had lain in ice for a week. It absolutely took away my breath when Frau Krause asked me to take a seat on the sofa beside Frau Bergfeldt. It was a terrible moment for the party, and all noticed it, yet no one said a word. All at once Fritz broke the awful silence by singing out: "Wait till the clouds roll by!" This made everybody laugh, while I and Frau Bergfeldt on the sofa, side by side, coloured up to our eyebrows. The moment had now come to show which of us two was the better bred, and so I at once exclaimed: "Well, let the clouds roll by;" whereupon Frau Bergfeldt added, "Yes, certainly, let them; there's but one New Year's Eve in the year!" Everyone agreed to this, tea was brought in, and after tea preserved cherries with whipped cream for the ladies, and beer for the gentlemen. And before I knew where I was I found myself chatting away with Frau Bergfeldt in our old pleasant way. The young people set about playing "hunt the thimble," and Uncle Fritz took part in it, keeping the whole party merry with laughter, while we elderly folks talked about this and that till supper was ready. Frau Bergfeldt had told me that

young Weigelt was doing well, and would probably have passed his examinations by next year, and that then he and Augusta would be married; she also made me promise that I would come to the wedding. It was just the old days over again. I suspect Herr Krause had had a talk with her. This made it clear to me how much good a sensible man can do, if he but uses his opportunity properly. In fact, I could not help wishing that my Carl were a little more like Herr Krause in this, much as I am satisfied with him in every other way.

At supper too it was extremely pleasant. We were a little closely packed, it is true, but still there was room enough. First we had the regular New Year's soup (*Mahnpielen*), then stewed carp with horse-radish, roast meat with preserved fruit, and ice to finish up. In the centre of the table stood the punch-bowl. Herr Krause and Uncle Fritz filled our glasses from it, and when the bowl was emptied Frau Krause fetched a new supply in a large jug and refilled the bowl. The merriment went on increasing. Between the courses we sang songs, which Fritz accompanied on the piano. Before the fish we sang *Wohlauf noch getrunken den funkelnden Wein*, and before the roast *Wir gehen nach Lindenau*, to which Fritz made up a lot of new verses, singing them as solos, we others joining in as the chorus. How we did laugh, to be sure! In one verse Fritz made a

hit at me and my writing by singing something about my liking my letters to be read everywhere, "even in Lindenau." What a merry fellow he is! Even little Krause joined in the songs, and all the evening kept on humming "We're off to Lindenau."

When we had the ice *intus*, as young Weigelt is fond of putting it, Herr Krause rose, looked at his watch and knocked his glass to make way for his speech. In a moment there was a perfect and even a solemn silence; the boy Krause too dropped his singing after having got a gentle slap from his father; and truly Herr Krause's speech was most affecting. . . . Just as Herr Krause ended we heard twelve o'clock striking dolefully in the next room, and we drank healths all round by knocking our re-filled glasses one against the other. Young Krause however called out: "It struck thirteen; I counted it!"—and this was, in fact, quite true. Uncle Fritz, who had struck the hour in the next room with the tongs, had given thirteen raps by way of a joke. We laughed, of course, but did not let this disturb our merriment, although, as everyone knows, thirteen is not a very comfortable number.

Uncle Fritz has, in fact, a good deal of the free-thinker about him.

We remained till about two in the morning, and broke up, feeling that we had spent a very merry and

pleasant evening. Frau Bergfeldt invited us to their house for her birthday festival, which is in a day or two, and I have accepted. Thus, it may be said, the hatchet lies buried betwixt us.

CHAPTER V

A MAGNETIC PARTY WHICH LEADS TO A DRAMATIC SITUATION AND A MOTHER'S TEARS

Another party was quickly arranged. At that time Berlin was greatly excited by human magnetism, or hypnotic suggestion, and the Buchholzes, Bergfeldts, Krauses, and Uncle Fritz all met to subject the new marvel to the test. But first I should say that Frau Buchholz had been put into excellent spirits by the prospect of a legacy from her aunt at Bützow, who had just died, and she was already beginning to revise her list of friends in consequence.

I TOLD the children that we were going to have a magnetic tea-party the next day. Emmi seemed delighted, but Betti became deathly pale and cried: "Oh, Mamma, please do not, we shall all be made wretchedly unhappy."—"Betti!" I exclaimed in surprise.—"Mamma, believe what I say."—"But child, whatever is the matter with you? You have

lately, I know, not been looking as well as you did. You hardly ever speak, never laugh, and are always playing doleful tunes on the piano. I noticed too the other day that, when we had your favourite dish—mashed potatoes with sausages—you had only one helping. What does all this mean, Betti?”—“I had headache,” was her answer.—“That comes from too much studying,” said I, “have you still essays to write for school?”—“Yes.”—“And what was your last subject?”—“We had to consider whether Richard III. would have been a good man had he had different parents.”—“I shall speak to your father and see whether these lessons of yours at the Institution for the Higher Education of Girls had not better be dropped. This afternoon, at all events, we shall have to set about making pastry for to-morrow, and shall have to make more than usual, for there is scarcely ever enough when the Bergfeldts are of the party.” “Oh, Mamma, I thought you and Frau Bergfeldt had made up your quarrel.” “Well, yes, we did; but nevertheless I am not fond of the family. And as we shall be coming into the property of my aunt in Bützow, there will be a greater difference between us and the Bergfeldts than ever there was. They must have to pinch fearfully to make both ends meet.”

My girls helped me in the kitchen. Betti, however, again complained of headache, so I thought it

wisest to pack them both off for a walk, as the fresh air might do Betti's head good. I meant it all for the best, yet, as it turned out afterwards, I did very wrong to let Betti out of my sight that day.

Next evening the Krauses and Bergfeldts came in as arranged. There were no less than five of the Bergfeldts—he, she, Augusta and her young man, and Emil the son. However, I was prepared with the necessary amount of cakes.—“Where is Betti?” said I to Emmi, noticing that my eldest girl was not there.—“She won't come in,” answered Emmi.—“Let me have a talk with her,” said Uncle Fritz, “I fancy she's afraid of the magnetism.” After a time Betti did appear, but, oh my stars! what a sight the child looked! Her eyes were red with crying, her cheeks without a vestige of colour, and she quaked so, any one might have noticed it. To-morrow, thought I, Doctor Wrenzchen must be sent for; there is something more than merely external the matter with her—she must be ill. Betti came forward and saluted our visitors, first the Krauses, of course, as people of more importance than the Bergfeldts; then she went up to Frau Bergfeldt, however, threw her arms round her and gave her a kiss. This struck me as a little peculiar, I must confess, and Fritz put on a most amused expression when he saw my amazement at this piece of familiarity. However, tea was then served, Betti, Emmi and Augusta

handing round the things. The one took the tea, the other the cream and sugar, and the third the cakes—which every one said were excellent. The truth is, however, that the cakes were not quite what they might have been, for when making them my attention had to be divided between Betti and the paste-bowl; still the cakes were well enough flavoured.

The gentlemen then began a very learned conversation about human magnetism. Fritz declared himself a believer in it; Herr Krause was not altogether sure; Herr Bergfeldt was quite opposed to the idea; and my Carl said nothing, but drank his beer. Fritz related that when the Breslau professors came to Berlin, they brought matters so far at the Charité, that by merely laying their hands on a cabman they had made him recite the opening lines of Homer in Greek. This made Herr Krause declare that, as a teacher, he must be allowed to express his doubt about the truth of such a story. Fritz, however, fetched a volume where this statement had been recorded by the professors. These records spoke of wonderful things, such as, for instance, that by means of hypnotism a person could be made to do anything the magnetiser wished—made to believe that he was riding a horse while on a chair, to swallow string and to fancy it lampreys, to drink bitters and to imagine it champagne. “Nay, but I hope he

enjoyed it too!" exclaimed Frau Bergfeldt. Herr Krause maintained that he could not believe this to be true till he had seen something of the kind with his own eyes. I, thereupon, threw in the story about my aunt in Bützow, and took the opportunity of letting the Bergfeldts know that we had come into a good bit of money. Fritz began, however, to dispute the subject with Herr Bergfeldt, and proposed to make some experiments to convince those who had doubts.

We were all very excited as to what would happen. Fritz then asked Augusta to go out of the room, and when she had gone, he asked us what we would like her to do. We were all willing that she should open the photograph album and point her finger at my husband's portrait. Uncle Fritz then called her in, blindfolded her, and stood behind her, placing his hands upon her shoulders. Augusta stood for a little perfectly still, then all of a sudden she walked to the table, took up the album, turned over the pages, and then pointed to a photograph. The one she pointed to was not exactly Carl's likeness, but that of his friend Ringelmeier, who was now dead. Nevertheless, what she had done was most surprising, especially as Frau Bergfeldt assured us that one day lately Augusta had managed to find the very photograph that had been fixed upon. Herr Krause still declared that he could see

nothing supernatural in the experiment, whereupon Augusta said that she was not in the proper mood this evening, but that Betti made a splendid medium.

"Our Betti?" I exclaimed in dismay.—"The children have been amusing themselves pretty often lately with human magnetism," put in Frau Bergfeldt.—"I've been told nothing about it then," was my reply.—"You've got to be told a good many things yet, Wilhelmine," was Fritz's remark. He then turned to Betti, saying: "Are you ready to begin?" Betti did not answer, but sat looking like a ghost. "Come, Betti, pick up your courage; it's got to be done, you know." Betti rose and went out of the room, looking just as if she were walking in her sleep. Augusta followed her. "Now, Wilhelmine," said Fritz, "you fix upon something for her to do."—"I can't think of anything just at this minute," said I.—"Well, then, shall she embrace and kiss the person dearest to her on earth?" asked Fritz. My answer was: "Do as you like; I don't mind having an embrace from her." Betti came in and was blindfolded. For some time she seemed to hesitate about what she had to do, but then came forward, and I had already opened my arms to receive her, when she turned aside, went straight up to Emil Bergfeldt, who looked down at her with emotion, and sank into his arms, and he quickly unbound her eyes and kissed her.—"This is going beyond a joke!"

I cried, and rose up. "Carl, do you stand there quietly and allow such things to go on?"—"Come, Wilhelmine," said Fritz, "do not get angry; these two have long since made up their minds. They are in love with each other, and there's an end of it."

"I beg leave to differ from you, Fritz. I've a word to say surely on such a subject! And you, Carl, do you say nothing to all this?"—"I have given my consent," he replied quietly.—"And I say it's impossible, now that we have come into that money."—"And I say just because of that," replied Carl, "haven't you noticed how our child has been suffering latterly, and that she has been fading away like a shadow?"—"I certainly have noticed it," said I.—"Well, then, I've got to tell you that it all comes from her struggle between duty and love, it's this that made her miserable. Betti hadn't the courage to tell you that she was in love with Emil Bergfeldt."—"Did she tell you, then?" "No, she didn't," put in Fritz, "but I saw what was going on, and begged Carl to leave me to tell you in my own way. As you see, I have now done so on the magnetic principle."—"And allow me to tell you that I have other prospects in view for my daughters; they may get quite into the upper circles now."—"And perhaps be made miserable," added Carl bitterly. "When we were young, did we ever think about rank and position? Would you have refused

me had some man of title come to take you from me?"—While he was speaking my thoughts flew back to that blessed time when I could not possibly have done otherwise than love him—him, who had become more than all the world to me. And here I was, fancying that my girls were children still, never thinking it possible that they too would one day wish to choose for themselves as their hearts prompted them, and never thinking that the time had actually come. "Betti!" I cried; and she came to me, threw her arms round me, and sobbed as if her heart would break. "Oh, Betti, you had no trust in me, no trust in your mother!"—"Mamma," she sobbed, "I did not want to grieve you. I knew you would not consent to my loving Emil . . . and so I could not tell you that I loved him." . . .

I had now recovered my calmness of mind, and led Betti away to her room, where I told her that I did not mean to give my consent forthwith, or to be intimidated by Uncle Fritz's way of acting.

On returning to the sitting-room, I told our guests that what had taken place was a mere piece of nonsense of Fritz's, who had only wanted to induce us to believe in human magnetism, and, therefore, that there could be no question about any serious engagement between my Betti and Emil Bergfeldt. Carl seemed very much annoyed at my remarks, and Frau Bergfeldt said: "Dear Frau Buchholz, the young

people need be in no hurry. There's time enough yet for Emil." "Plenty," said I dryly.—"If only you did not bubble up so, we might long since have talked the matter over," muttered that Frau Bergfeldt. "So you were in the plot too!" said I. "We met yesterday afternoon to discuss with Herr Fritz what was to be done, and he maintained we should never get your consent in any straightforward manner. I am myself more for letting things take their natural course."—I felt petrified. To think of my baking those cakes yesterday for that brood of vipers, and Betti with them conspiring against her own mother! Every one knew about it except myself. The very thought of it made me laugh a horrid laugh.—"There now," said Frau Bergfeldt, "she's going to have a fit, and we shall have to hold her thumbs."—"No," I exclaimed, "you'll do nothing of the kind! And I should like to see any one of you force me to give in. Nothing whatever shall come of your plottings, not though Herr Emil were to open one of his arteries before my very eyes."—"Wilhelmine, you don't know what you're saying," cried Carl.—"I'm as quiet as ever I was—but shall not allow myself to be made a fool of."

When they had all gone I had a regular cry, and then went to Betti. She was in bed and looked up at me so sadly when I sat down beside her, that I felt sick at heart. "Forgive me, Mamma, I ought to

have told you and only you," she said entreatingly. —I was about to answer: "You are still a child, Betti,"—but was she still a child? Her lovely thick hair was loosened and fell round about her, and her face showed an expression of seriousness unknown to children. She now seemed to me a soft, budding blossom; I had not noticed it before. "Betti, and do you really love him?" I asked.—"Yes," she whispered.—"Do you love him more than you do me?" She was silent—and then I knew I had lost my child, and that her whole being now belonged to another. Ah, how unspeakably painful it is to discover that!

I bent down over her bed and embraced her warmly and lovingly, and said: "You shall be happy, my child, as happy as I once was. I did fancy that you might have become the wife of a man in some good position; but have I not been happy enough in our simple home? No, darling, I have no wish to see you a loveless wife amidst fine carved furniture, nor that winter should be lurking behind silken curtains during your summer-time, or that aversion to your enforced husband should be your constant attendant. You see, I love you after all, better than you think." She cuddled up to me and was my child again, and smiled at me and said: "I love you both, Mamma, you and him, and you will love him too as much as you love me,

won't you?" Could I do otherwise than say yes?

I called to Emmi to bring in a few slices of the roast meat, for why should it be spoiled? "We will celebrate the betrothal by a slice of venison."—"Where is the betrothal?" asked Emmi. "Go you to bed, Emmi, you know nothing about such things yet."

And so I remained and watched by Betti.

CHAPTER VI

A WHIT-MONDAY PICNIC AND A GRIEVOUS DISCOVERY REGARDING EMIL BERGFELDT

THERE are people who think it a pleasure to make up a party for an excursion into the country; but that is a downright mistake.

On Whit-Monday we have generally gone out to the Zoological Gardens or had a drive to Treptow where, except for the crowds of people and the dust, it is very pleasant; but this year we settled to spend the day differently, for Betti's engagement to young Bergfeldt had drawn our families closer together, so we could not, of course, leave them out of the question. I would never have tolerated Betti's going with the Bergfeldts, and naturally they wanted Emil to spend the day with them. Uncle Fritz therefore proposed that we should all join in hiring a wagonette, and drive out into the country. He further said that there would be room enough for the Krauses to go too, which would make it a cheaper

affair all round. Fritz, moreover, described everything in such glowing colours—how green the country would be looking, how delicious the bread from the farm would taste by the brookside, and how delightful the drive itself in the waggonette would be—that I agreed to the plan at once. There was plenty to discuss beforehand, especially about the provisions, for otherwise people are so apt to take the same things, and it would probably have ended in nothing but plain sausages and hard-boiled eggs. I for one should be sorry to have no more than that on the Monday of Whitsuntide.

By eight in the morning we had all taken our seats in the waggonette—the Bergfeldts, with Augusta's young man Weigelt, the Krauses, and their boy Edward in white trousers, blue velvet jacket and a new straw hat. Emil Bergfeldt had come over to us early in the morning and had brought Betti a bunch of elder flowers. When we were taking our seats Emil had contrived to get a place beside Betti. However, I planted myself in between them, as I considered it more suitable that they should be apart. I am not one for love-making in public. Carl sat beside Herr Krause, and Uncle Fritz took his seat in front, on the box beside the driver.

When we started Fritz took out his latch-key and whistled away on it as if he had been a steam-engine, and away we rolled through the Prenzlau Gate-

way, along the Prenzlau Chaussée, for our destination was the Liepnitz Lake.

The weather was beautiful, although a little cool. When we passed the first windmill Uncle Fritz uncorked his flask and said that we must have a mouthful all round, as it was the regular custom. We were not so very warm, so we did take a drop or two of cognac and became very merry. Herr Krause asked whether it was the custom to drink at every mill, whereupon Fritz declared that it was an old custom to drink to every mill. Herr Krause suggested that this custom probably was of Wendish origin, and very likely dated from the hoary days of heathenism. This led to a very learned talk about lake-dwellings and Tacitus, subjects about which Herr Krause knew a great deal; but the conversation again turned upon municipal government, where my Carl, of course, felt himself perfectly at home. Uncle Fritz meanwhile conversed with the coachman, and every now and then handed his flask to us in the waggonette. I must confess there were mills in plenty along the road, and what I specially disliked was that the boy Krause was for ever calling out: "There's another mill!" so that none could be passed unnoticed. I warned Carl, but he only laughed at me and said: "Whit-Monday comes but once a year, Wilhelmine."

At half-past eight the horses were made to go at a

walking pace, and the baskets were brought out for breakfast. The ladies handed the buttered bread to the gentlemen, and Uncle Fritz came forward with an extra treat for us all by producing all sorts of tins that he had purchased at the Exhibition—delicious Norwegian herrings, anchovies, salted cod-tongues, rolled pickled herrings, and even caviare—something of everything; and we did thoroughly enjoy the dainties. What I objected to, however, was that the boy Krause got these salted fish to eat; if he didn't get everything he wanted he immediately began to whimper, and his mother then gave in to him. One piece of pickled herring, however, which he bit at greedily, so burnt his mouth owing to the cayenne pepper, that he began to cry, and this made me speak out. "I wouldn't let that boy have all these things, Frau Krause; children are always best kept to bread-and-milk." But she answered that her Edward was now big enough to eat anything, that he could drink beer like any grown-up person, and that it agreed with him admirably. Hereupon I remarked that I had read that to give children beer had a bad effect upon their intellects, and that brewers' children were always the most backward at school. Frau Krause asked her husband if he, as a teacher, had ever noticed such a thing, and his answer was, that I had probably confounded the statement, and that scrofula was no doubt meant; for

it had been statistically proved that this disease proceeded from the excessive brandy-drinking in parents. Herr Bergfeldt agreed with him in this, and said to his wife: "You must remember, Kathinka, that girl Rieka from Werder, who was a servant in our house and who went wrong with that drunken carpenter, and afterwards——" But I interrupted him there by asking him whether he didn't think the scenery very beautiful? "Yes," said he, "but it is perfectly true about scrofula." My answer was that that kind of dialogue wasn't to my taste.

Herr Bergfeldt, however, would not give way, we had passed too many mills for that. Just then the boy Krause began to whimper again and to complain of thirst. Water could not be got on the high road, and milk the senseless mother had not brought with her, so there was nothing to be done but to open a bottle of red wine, and that merely to stop the boy's squalling. He eagerly drank a whole wine-glass full. "I only hope it may do him good!" said I.—"He can run it off afterwards on the heath," replied Frau Krause. "Emmi and I will play at horses," said the boy saucily. Emmi said nothing, but made rather a contemptuous face at the suggestion. Betti was rather silent and did not look extra happy, because she was not sitting next to Emil. Augusta Bergfeldt and young Weigelt had hold of each other's hands, and stared out into vacancy,

looking for all the world like a couple of wax figures; it was only occasionally that they glanced at each other in a sheepish kind of way; the mere looking at them made me feel quite uncomfortable. Engaged couples are, in fact, worse than no company, except to themselves.

I thanked Heaven in my heart, therefore, when we at last reached the splendid forest and caught sight of the lake, which looked as green as if it had been newly varnished for Whitsuntide. We halted at the forester's house, where the beeches stand highest and their tops meet, forming a kind of cupola like that at the new Anhalt railway station, only, of course, there the dome is made of panes of glass, and here of the delicate green leaves of May. And then the ozone here is of the best quality.

Uncle Fritz and Carl went to the forester's wife to order the mid-morning meal and to discuss what was wanted for dinner. Frau Krause discovered a well, and gave Edward a drink; the boy, according to my calculation, must have swallowed nearly a quart of water, but I didn't say anything; when mothers are so unreasonable, words are as good as thrown away. I wish now, however, that I had spoken.

The mid-morning meal was deliciously rustic and excellent. Wine we had brought with us, that is to say, Chateau Larose, twelve and a half groschen the

bottle, with gilt tops. Uncle Fritz did certainly turn up his nose a little at it, but then he is pretty well spoilt; we others enjoyed it, particularly as the wine merchant had told us he lost about sixpence on each bottle, and let us have it at the price out of pure friendship.

We then went for a walk into the woods. Uncle Fritz cut little Krause a stick off a tree, and he ran away riding about upon it, as Emmi was not disposed to be his horse. In fact, poor Emmi was somewhat low-spirited. Her sister and friend paid no heed to her; they, of course, had neither eyes nor ears for any one but their lovers, and so Emmi had no one to go about with except us elderly ladies. I felt quite sorry for the child being so forsaken, for when we ladies conversed about the big washing, or discussed whether lemon juice ought or ought not to be added to asparagus sauce, of course she could not be expected to be interested. "Cheer up, Emmi," said I, "who knows but what you may yourself be engaged before long."—"I shall never marry!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean, child?"—"No, I never will," she said sadly, "I shall never leave you and Papa; Augusta and Betti are both so horrid since they've been engaged!" I talked to her as best I could, but she would listen to nothing.

The gentlemen had meanwhile discovered a good

resting-place; plaids and shawls were spread out, and we sat down comfortably in a picturesque group. Wine had been brought, so that we had all we wanted. I was displeased at one thing, which was that Carl kept throwing dry leaves at Frau Krause, and she didn't seem to mind it. Had Herr Krause tried that joke on with me, I would have let him know what I thought of such behaviour; but he had lain down and was already sound asleep.

It was not long before I felt myself beginning to nod too, for the spring air tires one. The trees seemed to rustle so gently, the air played so softly about one's face and hair, all sorts of bright dreams seemed to flit to and fro; this went on till all of a sudden I heard Carl calling out: "Wake up, Wilhelmine, it's half-past two, and dinner's ready."—"Goodness!" I exclaimed, "have I been asleep? And for a couple of hours? Where are the children? Where's Betti?"—"She's gone away in among the fir-trees with Emil; they wouldn't let me go with them."

We had finished dinner when Betti and Emil made their appearance. I was on the point of speaking a little sharply to them, when Carl said: "Now, Wilhelmine, do keep quiet, and don't expose yourself to remarks in public." So I checked myself and said jocosely: "Well, Emil, does your watch only make it half-past two?" He seemed a little put out,

and stammered something about his watch being a little slow. "More than an hour, I should say; let us see that precious chronometer of yours?" Emil seemed more than ever uneasy. This struck me as peculiar, so I said severely: "Perhaps your watch is perfectly right after all," and pulled at his watch chain to get his watch. Alas, there was no watch at all at the end of his chain, nothing but a key!

"The watch is no doubt in retirement," put in Uncle Fritz. I was mortified, and felt as if I could have sunk into the ground. Fancy my Betti's betrothed having pawned his watch! Frau Krause tittered, which made me get up and leave the company. I could not look a creature in the face. All the people round about us, who had assembled since we came, showed happy faces, and fun and merriment were to be heard on all sides; to my ears it all sounded like mockery. I felt in need of being alone, so as to have a good cry. And so, without knowing in the least how I got there, I found myself in the back garden close to the bakery, and I sat down on a log of wood near it. Oh, I felt as if that log were an executioner's block, and that I was about to lose my head, so miserable and wretched did I feel. The future before me seemed of the blackest; of what use now was the property left us by my aunt in Bützow? Emil would pawn everything! Emil was

frivolous—I knew that now; but Betti, of course, would trust him completely. A shudder passed over me, for it seemed to me that a person who would pawn a watch, was capable of anything.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE EVE OF THE WEDDING OF HERR WEIGELT
AND AUGUSTA, A ROSY FUTURE DAWNS FOR EMMI

IF I had been in Frau Bergfeldt's place I would have been content with quite a simple wedding, and have only invited the family circle, as expense had to be considered. However, this was not Frau Bergfeldt's idea; she would not hear of a wedding without mirth and music. She declared that it was one's duty to one's neighbours, if nothing else, and that in any case there would have to be some outlay. It was at last agreed to have the usual festive gathering on the evening before the wedding, and to make use of what was left for the wedding-day itself, when they would only be a family party.

The festivities were to begin at eight o'clock. The best room, the parlour and bedroom were all made use of for the reception of the guests. The beds had been carried up to the loft, and Frau Bergfeldt placed a table with plants where their washstand

had stood, for, as she said, "Herr Bergfeldt always splashed so dreadfully whilst washing that he had ruined the wall-paper." Chairs, glasses and dishes had been furnished by a tradesman in the neighbourhood, for the Bergfeldts' few possessions were not nearly enough.

When we arrived at about half-past eight the rooms were already pretty well filled. The ladies were requested to move into the best room, and took their seats in a pleasant semicircle. Of course Frau Bergfeldt had invited the whole round of her acquaintances, so that we were all more or less strangers to one another. Augusta's own friends were also there and seemed not in the least to know what to do with themselves, and kept sitting three on two chairs. Young Weigelt's landlady, with whom he had lived while a student, was also present.

The gentlemen stood about the room and smoked. Of young Weigelt's friends there were also a number, for the most part students in their last term, very pleasant young fellows. Their dress-coats, however, I must say, seemed to fit them rather oddly and looked as if they had been made for some one else.

By nine o'clock the rooms were crammed full, and one could scarcely move about. Meanwhile tea had been handed round and people began talking to one

another. The engaged couple had not yet made their appearance.

Hereupon Uncle Fritz, who had undertaken the arrangement of affairs, came in. He was followed by two of Weigelt's friends, each of whom carried a chair decked with flowers into the best room, and placed them close to the door that led into the parlour. Then Fritz sat down at the piano—a regular old tin-kettle—and struck up the Wedding March out of the “Midsummer Night's Dream.” This was the sign for the entry of the bride and bridegroom, who now came in, pushing their way through the guests, and took their places upon the beflowered chairs. The students gave a loud hurrah when they appeared, and we others clapped our hands too. All this was really very touching, and Fritz had rightly calculated upon the effect.

Augusta Bergfeldt looked pretty well, comparatively speaking. She wore a white muslin dress with green run through it. However, had she been wise, she would never have chosen a low-necked dress. This had struck Carl too, for, as he afterwards told me, he felt quite chilly whenever he looked at her. Of course, I did not let that remark of his pass unnoticed. “Carl,” I said, “love is too sublime a thing for it to be ridiculed.”—“Well, you should just have heard what the students said about her,” was his reply. “Carl,” said I, “I don't wish to hear it, and in-

deed won't hear it. Moreover, I have no wish whatever to hear what gentlemen say to one another when ladies are not present. Students are much too free in their ideas for my taste."

Fritz then played some touching piece of music, and my Betti came in, dressed like a fairy, holding the wedding wreath. She recited a very beautiful poem, which spoke of the parting from the parents' house, from youth, from the joys of childhood, and of the sorrows that were hidden in the future. It closed with the words, "With the wedding wreath and veil, ends for aye the blissful dream." Tears started to Augusta's eyes at the very first words of the poem, and when the line came about being orphaned and forsaken far from the beloved old home, Frau Bergfeldt herself began to cry. Betti wound up by throwing her arms round Augusta, who burst out into loud sobs, and we others could no longer restrain our tears either, and had to take to our handkerchiefs. I have never witnessed anything more affecting than this scene. But then it is no small matter, surely, to give up one's daughter to a young man, and he almost an utter stranger.

Then came little Krause. I at once suspected that we should have nothing good from him, his mother spoils him too much. "Now, Eduard dear," she said, "come and let us have your verse." The boy, who was dressed as a young Tyrolese, would

not utter a syllable, and stuck his finger in his mouth. "Eduard, I shall be terribly angry," continued the mother, whereupon the boy drew a long face as if about to cry. "Come, come, Eddy, be a darling." But Eddy could not be made to say a word. "He knew the poem so well this morning," added the mother again; "but the number of people here make him feel confused. Come, Eddy, dear, go and say the poem to Auntie Augusta in a low voice, and give her the silver sugar spoon. Do you hear, Eduard!"

"The spoon belongs to us," cried the brat. "Papa only had our name scratched out!"

Frau Krause in her annoyance looked like an enraged fury, and this made the boy fly off howling to his father, saying that his mother was going to beat him. Herr Krause was sensible enough to pack him off home.

After this Emmi sang, to Fritz's accompaniment, that lovely song: *Wir saßen still am Fenster, das Licht war ausgebrannt*. When she finished, there was no end to the applause—the students were perfectly wild; and so, as an *encore*, she sang *Wenn ich nach meinem Kinde geh', In seinem Aug' die Mutter seh'!* She received the most extravagant compliments for her performance, one of the students even declared that it was very doubtful whether Gerster could have sung it as well, that

Fräulein Buchholz's singing had something peculiarly melodious about it.

The young people now expressed a wish to have a dance. The students therefore—with a one, two, three—pushed the old piano out into the bedroom, although Herr Bergfeldt stood by with rather a doubtful expression of face.

While we were sitting there looking on and chatting, the Police-lieutenant's wife said to me that my Emmi had such an excellent voice, it seemed a pity not to have it cultivated properly.

"That has never struck me," said I; "the girl sings everything almost by ear."

"My daughter is going to have singing-lessons," said the Police-lieutenant's wife. "I have heard of a lady who is looking for pupils. She used to sing at the Opera herself; and nowadays good voices can demand such high prices. Just look at Patti and Lucca, what celebrity and money they have made!"

I felt perfectly giddy. Had not Emmi a few minutes ago been tremendously applauded? And had she not sung most bewitchingly? "I will have a talk with my husband about it," I replied; "something, of course, will have to be done for the girl." Goodness me, to think that our Emmi might make a fabulous fortune with her voice! It was a grand thought; Carl will have nothing to say against the lessons when I have explained it all to him.

When the Bergfeldts got to bed I do not know. I should think not for two days afterwards!

“Carl,” said I on our way home, “when our Betti gets married we will have the *Polter-abend* somewhere out of the house.”

On the way home Frau Buchholz refrained from mentioning her new plans for Emmi, as Carl was not in the best of tempers. The Bergfeldt party had been interrupted by a visit from the Landlord, who complained of the noise, and this had spoiled the fun. Frau Buchholz therefore prudently held her tongue.

When men are out of temper they're best left to themselves. He will be surprised some day when he finds his child renowned and great; and I mean to carry my point about this.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MELANCHOLY REASON FOR FRAU BUCHHOLZ'S DEPARTURE FOR THE SEASIDE

IT could not be denied: Emmi had been a great success. And was such talent to be allowed to rust in the Landsbergerstrasse? Could I be responsible for such a thing? No; we shall all one day be called upon to give an account of ourselves, and no excuses will be taken. And I am not like Frau Bergfeldt, who would meddle with things on the Day of Judgment, unless care were taken to keep her out of the way, till the end. Emmi's voice must be artistically cultivated. It was my duty, I considered, to attend to this, all the more so as the Police-lieutenant's wife greatly persuaded me to do so, and told me that if Emmi were to join her daughter in taking lessons, the lady-teacher would make a great reduction in her charges. I should certainly not be a true German housewife could I have allowed such an opportunity to escape. No, when

anything cheap is offered me I do not allow it to pass; it is only those sixpenny bazaars that I dislike, and I shall never again buy any articles there, for in the end one has to lay out more in paste and cement than the whole rubbish is worth. Even Carl—to whom naturally I did not communicate the fact about the lessons till the second quarter's fees became due, and when it would have been a sin to interrupt the instruction—even Carl confessed that he had nothing to say against the price of the lessons. His admitting this much made me feel very well satisfied.

And Emmi certainly did make prodigious progress, as the lady herself assured me when she came to see me. "One more course, dear madam," she said, "and your daughter will be a match for Lucca. She already sings the high C with ease, and her roulades show such liquidity that one might say she had the talent of an Artôt!" I was greatly delighted at this, and thought in my heart if Emmi becomes great and celebrated I shall die for joy. And why should not my daughter have this in prospect? Many a girl has become a great singer whose family were nothing like in the position that we are.

Frau Grün-Reifferstein was, moreover, the very teacher we could have wished for Emmi. She often told me and the Police-lieutenant's wife of her former stage life, and of the dangers that young singers

are exposed to. However, that she had always shown herself strong, had never lowered herself, not even when a prince offered her a left-handed marriage. She knew what young persons were exposed to behind the scenes when they had not previously been "fortified" for the stage—that she fortified her pupils just because she knew all the risks they ran. How overjoyed I was to think of Emmi in such good hands! Frau Heimreich's eldest girl—by her first marriage—was also studying with Frau Grün-Reifferstein, and this did not altogether please me; however, the girl was supposed to have some voice, and so there was no use saying anything, although the mother is a perfect horror to me.

One of the principals of Frau Grün-Reifferstein's Academy for Singing is to give an annual performance to enable parents to see what their children have accomplished.

At this year's performance Emmi was to take part in the singing, and, moreover, to appear as Gabriele in the "Night Watch at Granada"; first in the scene where the soldier brings her back the dove that had escaped, and then the scene where she throws stones at the sleeping soldier to warn him of the approaching bandits.

The excitement was very great. A whole month beforehand everything seemed to turn upon the coming performance, so much so that I had to forbid the

girls to speak of it in their father's presence, for he got angry at the very mention of such words as rehearsal, costume, performance, &c. I cannot say, however, that I was indifferent to the matter. In the first place, I considered that all would depend upon the dress that Emmi wore. I was not going to allow her to appear in fantastic attire; so the dressmaker was called in, and we arranged for her to make a white satin dress in the latest fashion, with a train, which we decided should be trimmed with gold and red satin, as the scene of the opera was in Spain. Pretty little high-heeled boots also were not forgotten. Frau Grün-Reifferstein, I must say, did think the dress a little too splendid for the peasant-girl Emmi was to represent, but I answered very emphatically that my daughter should not appear a dowdy, and that unless she wore the dress I wished, she should not take part in the performance at all; so she gave in meekly enough. When you can do a thing well, you like people to know it!

Still it would, after all, have been better had that dress never been made. I feel enraged whenever I think of it.

Well, the day of the performance drew near, and, like all other great events, it actually arrived at last. We were a pretty large party of ourselves, for we took with us all the Bergfeldts, the Krauses, and the Weigelts, as well as some other friends. Dr. Wrenz-

chen, to whom I had sent a card of invitation, begged us to excuse his not going, as he was unusually busy. That good man, however, never has time for anything when it doesn't suit his purpose. I afterwards heard that that same evening he had been out at Patzenhofers' playing *skat* with his friends; yet it is high time he were looking about for a nice wife. Well, I don't mean to press my girls upon him. But that's just the way with these medical men.

Then came Emmi's turn. Yes, there it was on the programme, "Gabriele, Fräulein Buchholz; A Jäger, Herr Meyer!" The curtain rose. Herr Meyer in a soldier's dress came forward and sang; a lanky creature, whose head almost touched the ceiling, and who, owing to a sort of internal panic, kept rolling his eyes from right to left as if he had a bad conscience. The door of the cottage opened and Emmi appeared. A loud "Oh!" went round the hall, and a weight seemed to fall from my heart, for I felt she was admired.

Emmi commenced to sing. When, however, she ought to have advanced to the soldier, she could not move as her train had caught something behind the scenes. The girl became confused and stopped singing. The soldier saw the accident and gallantly loosened her train for her. The audience laughed. Emmi began again from the beginning; it was very

depressing. Carl whispered to me, "This is the first and last time that Emmi joins in any such performance." When the curtain fell there was not a sound of applause. Only Frau Bergfeldt, whom I had begged to do so beforehand, applauded with might and main. Every one turned their eyes upon us. I felt as if I should have liked to sink into the ground.

After a short pause came the second scene. In the centre of the stage stood a small sofa without a back, this served the soldier as a couch; on the left was a bit of scenery representing a house with a window above, and from this window Emmi was to sing her song. Meyer had finished his part and lay down on the sofa, which however was so short for him that his legs dangled a good way beyond the end of it. The audience seemed much amused. Emmi then appeared at the window and began her part and threw a stone at the soldier. To get a better aim the poor child leant too far out, and the bit of scenery moved forward and fell down slowly—I feel giddy whenever I think of it—carrying Emmi with it, right upon the sleeping soldier. The little table upon which she had been standing had given way; her high-heeled boots were no doubt partly to blame, and so also was her train. I hurried on to the stage. Fortunately Emmi had not hurt herself; but that Herr Meyer was tenderly holding her in his arms

and consoling her by saying: "Darling Emmi, thank God that it's no worse. I'll throttle that stage-manager." Fancy that creature calling my child his darling Emmi! The scales dropped from my eyes.

Frau Grün had gone on to the stage to assure the audience that no one had been hurt; she now returned.

"So this is the way you fortify your pupils for the stage!" I at once began, "you allow the young girls entrusted to your care to have their heads turned by your men-pupils?" She merely replied: "Madam, it seems you are totally unacquainted with theatrical concerns. Moreover, I consider Herr Meyer a good match for your daughter—he has talent, and may get on very well."

I turned my back upon her coldly and went with Emmi to the dressing-room and helped her in changing her dress. She had to make her confession. I then learned that it was the regular custom among the male and female pupils at Frau Grün-Reiffenstein's Academy to fall in love with each other. This was considered part of their artistic training, for it was supposed that they could not describe sentiment faithfully unless they had felt deeply themselves. Very pretty idea, that!

It now appears I ought never to have believed Frau Grün from the outset; that eternal singing

about love and nothing but love, and those plays where the talk is again always about love, must in the end lead inexperienced young people into mischief. And yet that woman was supposed to warn her pupils of the dangers of the stage and to "fortify" them. Abominable!

We drove home. Carl was very much put out. He did not even scold, but I saw plainly how much the whole affair had vexed him. And he did not yet know anything about that man Meyer.

I considered it my duty, however, to tell him about it.

"Wilhelmine," said he in reply, "this is all the result of your folly. Why is it that you are always seeking for happiness outside of your own sphere? What's the use of forcing yourself into relations that don't suit us?"

"My object was to do my best for Emmi; I thought she might one day become great and celebrated as a singer," I replied amid tears.

"We shall now have to think of something very different," said Carl; "we shall have to pack the girl off somewhere; she shall not be exposed to the mock sympathy of acquaintances. You will have to see that she forgets that man Meyer; one of that Grün-Reifferstein set, I tell you plainly, I won't have as a son-in-law."

So we discussed the matter and considered that

the best plan would be for me to take Emmi away to the seaside.

Frau Buchholz and her daughter therefore went off to Flunderndorf, leaving Carl and Betti in the Landsbergerstrasse. Flunderndorf was chosen with care.

Anywhere else we should have met acquaintances, who might at all events have heard of Emmi's unfortunate appearance at the Grün-Reifferstein's operatic performance; and such meetings were just what we wanted to avoid. Or would you like to be the talk of everybody?

There was another reason, however, for my coming here. I had heard that Dr. Wrenzchen came to Flunderndorf every year for sea-bathing. Now, as young people usually get to know each other very well at a seaside place, having, as it were, to make the best of one another, of course all sorts of possibilities flitted through my mind as I packed our boxes. There could be no doubt that it was becoming absolutely necessary for Dr. Wrenzchen to have a well-regulated domestic establishment, for we had heard recently that he had again celebrated his birthday with the most luxurious and unheard-of extravagance. Uncle Fritz said that it was enough to make one's hair stand on end, and that anything more unusual than the way the doctor celebrates his birthday could not be conceived. Now, if he married my

Emmi he might spend the day with us very pleasantly, with a cake for breakfast, a small party of ladies to coffee in the afternoon, and a pint of beer with sliced bread tastily decorated in the evening. I would soon make him drop his extravagant ways; his boon companions too would have to move off as soon as they caught sight of me.

To make a rough guess, we are about forty visitors in all, and as life is cheap in Flunderndorf, as a matter of course there is no Bleichröder among us. A good many persons take lodgings in the fishermen's cottages, where the so-called best rooms are let out by the week or month. Others take rooms at the hotel and meet at dinner. On the beach there are bathing machines, and along the shore is a wooden shed open towards the sea, where a sniff of sea air can be had even in bad weather. When the sun shines every one plays on the sand, ladies and gentlemen as well as children. I would not condescend to do this at first, but now I grub away bravely myself. Moreover, I have come to see that it's just as well for a few elderly ladies to join in this playing among the sand.

Besides ourselves there is only one other family here from Berlin, and they have clearly come for health's sake. The husband looks a mere shadow, and the wife and little daughter one would fancy did not often get a mouthful of fresh air. With hu-

man beings it's the same as with clothes, it is evident at once when they have been hanging up long in the dark.

These people have no doubt seen better days. I have several times tried to say a few friendly words to them, for naturally one likes to know what people one goes into the sea with; but it is always a "touch me not" with them, a regular polar iceberg with a polar bear on it.

There is, however, another lady from Hamburg with a little son, who at once became friendly with us. A very pleasant lady she is, and always beautifully dressed. The other day she wore a costume embroidered all over in black and white; the effect was splendid, and there were large bunches of pansies too about it, one in front, one behind, and one on the body to the left. Emmi and I were in raptures about it. This lady also wears magnificent jewelry, all of massive gold as she herself said. She told me that most of it had been given to her as birthday presents; she did not approve of buying such things herself. It was but natural that I should say a few words in praise of her generous husband, whereupon she gave me a poke in the ribs with her elbow, and laughed. When I expressed my surprise at this, she told me that her husband was away from home doing a roaring business in foreign parts, and that she and little Hannis, as the boy was called,

lived as a rule quietly in Hamburg. She was kind enough to say that she would have liked me to pay her a visit there, but while her husband was away she was living in apartments.

We took leave of her somewhat coolly after this, and left her and her boy Hannis on the beach.

In going through the village we accidentally passed the cottage where Dr. Wrenzchen was in the habit of taking up his quarters; so I could not do otherwise than inquire whether he had yet arrived or when he was expected. The man at the cottage informed us that the gentleman from Berlin would probably arrive late that same evening. So I said to Emmi: "To-morrow you put on your cream-coloured dress, and make yourself as smart as possible. The doctor will be desperately pleased at the attention."

So far all had gone well, but an occurrence was about to happen that I had never dreamt of. Of course not a mortal creature was to blame but that doctor; at all events, no one can say that I had any reason to find fault with myself.

Next morning we were up early. I dressed Emmi in a way that even the Stettin girl would have found it difficult to match. The weather was glorious. A thin haze lay over the sea, but gradually got more and more transparent, till at last the sea lay like a mirror before us reflecting the sun's rays. And the

sky was so blue, you might have fancied you were looking at a newly painted kitchen cupboard.

Now my plan was to go and give Dr. Wrenzchen a friendly welcome, to tell him how delighted we were at his coming, to keep him by us all day, and to invite him to cold roast veal in the evening. This, of course, we could easily do as he was our medical man and we were on friendly terms with him; it can never be said to be out of place to show some attention to a person who may more than once have saved your life. I meant also to beg him to give me and Emmi a lesson in the game of *skat*, the rest might be left to me. Fried potatoes, which he likes, he should, of course, also have had. But of what use are one's best intentions, one's loveliest plans, when those whom it all concerns prove wicked?

I gave the boy at the cottage a penny, and commissioned him to bring me word as soon as ever the gentleman from Berlin arose in the morning. Emmi and I waited in our garden and each of us gathered a nosegay. What feelings a mother's heart cherishes when gathering flowers on the morning of the day which will probably decide her child's future, it is impossible to describe; yet all mothers who know how difficult it is nowadays to get the right husband for a daughter, may perhaps imagine what filled my mind as I thought to myself: Here you are sitting in the garden among the flowers; beside you is your

child, over yonder in that cottage lies the doctor asleep, and the sun has risen and is standing in all his glory high above us all. How much wiser shall we all be when the sun has gone down?

Just then the boy from the cottage came running up, exclaiming: "He's been a-moving and a-singing too he has, allays up and down! If y're a bit quick, ye may catch him yet."

"Did you know that Dr. Wrenzchen could sing?" said I to Emmi.

"Oh, he has probably only been amusing himself," she replied, and with these words we set off to give the doctor the surprise we had prepared for him by way of a morning greeting.

His window was open. "Now, Emmi," I whispered, and with that we both flung our nosebags in at the window.

"Thank you, ladies," shouted an unknown voice, and the man to whom the voice belonged then made his appearance. It was Herr Meyer, the would-be opera singer, on whose very account, only a few days before, we had fled from Berlin!

"Sir," I cried, furious, "how dare you venture to follow us?"—"My good madam, let me ask you not to excite yourself. I came to Flunderndorf for my health and at my doctor's advice; he, in fact, directed me to this house, for, as he told me, he should have no time this year for a trip to the sea himself."

"Your doctor?" I cried incredulously.

"Certainly," was the answer, "Dr. Wrenzchen very kindly——" I did not let him finish his sentence, however, but took Emmi by the hand and dragged her off.

It was impossible for me to have a bathe that morning; so upset did I feel, I should very likely have had a stroke in the water. Emmi was quite gone again upon that lanky idiot of a singer, having just seen him, so that I may say we were now no further than we had been to begin with.

We shall have to be off from here—but where to? To think of Dr. Wrenzchen playing us such a trick!

After Table d'Hôte.

We are going to remain! Our elegant Hamburg acquaintance has offered that man Meyer an engagement; we have discovered that she is the lessee of a music-hall or some *café chantant* where more attention is devoted to eating and drinking than to art. Meyer is going to appear there. To think of our having been on intimate terms with such a person! This degradation of Meyer's has enabled Emmi to sweep all her admiration of the man out of her heart as if it had been sea-weed; to me this is a real mercy, and I feel truly thankful. He is to give a *soirée* this evening in the hotel *salon*, but, of course, we shall not be there.

We are, in fact, going for a walk with those people from Berlin whom we at first thought so poverty-stricken in their appearance. It turns out that he is a member of the Judicial Court, has aristocratic connections, and is living here in a most unpretentious kind of way with his family. Now as this is what I am doing myself, we are sure to get on, for nature draws congenial minds more closely together than art does, most likely because no feelings of envy come in the way. There is something very dignified about these people, even when they are taking their thickened milk with black bread. The judge's wife had noticed this morning that Emmi had been crying (N. B., about Meyer), and it was this that first led to our striking up an acquaintance. She was so sympathetic, and he too opened up and became quite sociable; the fact is, they had not liked the people we had taken up with at first, and so kept out of our way.

The doctor shall suffer for all this.

CHAPTER IX

AUGUSTA WEIGELT'S FIRST-BORN AND THE ASTONISHING BEHAVIOUR OF ITS FATHER

I AM firmly convinced that if some day Virchow were to measure the brain of that woman Bergfeldt, he would find it too short, for she has again been acting in the most inconceivable manner. What she did was enough to make one fly up a tree for safety; still, when you know that a person was born stupid and has never learned anything since, you no longer wonder, but simply shake your head.

One afternoon lately I was sitting knitting when Herr Weigelt unexpectedly appeared on the scenes. Emmi brought in the lamp, and Betti asked him how Augusta was and why she had not come too, and I asked the young man to take a seat as my husband might be in any moment.

Herr Weigelt has always, as far as I know, had something faint-hearted about him, but never have I seen him look as awkward and bashful as he was

that day. He sat down on the corner of a chair, and eyed me in such a guilty kind of way that I could not help exclaiming: "Good heavens, Herr Weigelt, what has happened to you; you look like a sick hen that can't afford to call in an apothecary!" He, however, sat there and never uttered a syllable, but kept gazing first at Betti, then at Emmi, and then again at me.

"But pray, Herr Weigelt," said I again, "what is one to think of you? You haven't surely got a murder on your conscience?" When I said this he collapsed like a badly made jelly, and with some effort got out the words: "If it were possible, I should like a few words alone with you, Frau Buchholz."

"Go away, children," said I, "and wait till your father comes in." They went away, and I was mightily impatient to know what Herr Weigelt wanted. My conjecture was that he might perhaps have had a scene with his wife or with his mother-in-law, perhaps even with both.

When we were alone, and after some dilly-dallying, he began in a doleful way by saying: "And this is the end of it!"—"To what?" I asked.—"Oh, Frau Buchholz," he replied, "my poor wife, my poor Augusta!"—"My goodness, who and what is it?"—"Nothing yet—but, but," his voice was all of a shake—"she won't get over it, it's impossible for her

to get over it!" This behaviour in a man greatly displeased me, so I said sternly: "Now listen to me, Herr Weigelt, I can feel no respect for you whatever—a man must above all things show himself brave."—"And so I have been till a short time ago," he interposed. "Lately I have had too much to bear!"—"How so?" I asked.—"Well," he answered, "first there was the trouble about the servant-girl. Augusta tried, at first, to get on with a char-woman, but she was obliged in the end to have proper assistance and so we got a girl at low wages whom my mother-in-law had recommended."

"Well, well," I remarked, laughing, "if she puts her fingers into things, she generally makes a pretty mess."—"The girl is as good as can be," added Herr Weigelt, "but as stupid as a block of wood. Not a day passes, but Augusta is quite upset by her, and yet we are told that she must above all things guard against excitement. I have been told that excitement is worse than poison to her in her present state, and, dear Frau Buchholz, I've been living in deadly terror out of pure anxiety about Augusta."

"No doubt," said I very seriously; "a husband who loves his wife truly, must get uneasy in his mind at times when he reflects that he has no thornless roses to offer her, and that her pathway through this vale of sorrows does sometimes lead her close to the

edge of the precipice! Have you been looking about for a trustworthy nurse for her?"

"We have already got one," he replied, "but that is the smallest part of the matter. Our greatest trouble is the work of my mother-in-law." "I am curious to know how!" I exclaimed; "whatever has she been about now?"—"One could hardly believe it," replied Herr Weigelt, "but in education she certainly is somewhat behind the mark." "That, Heaven knows, is true enough!" I remarked.—"But she is given to superstition as well," he continued, "and it occurred to her to go and consult a fortune-teller as to whether Augusta would get through her trouble or not. The cards prophesied that she would not, and the first thing Frau Bergfeldt did was to fly to Augusta to give her this melancholy news before it could cool."—"Is it possible?" I cried; "she surely cannot have her five senses about her! How did your wife receive this mad piece of news?"—"At first she laughed at it, then, however, she burst into such a violent fit of sobbing, that my heart sank within me. Since that day she goes about her work patiently, but like a sufferer whose days are numbered. She herself thinks now that she will not get over her trouble, and I too think she won't, and our neighbours think the same. And if she doesn't I shall be to blame. Why did I marry such a delicate little creature? Were it not for me she would still

live. And she has been looking forward so to next spring when we meant to have paid my parents a visit. And how delighted they would have been! The country air would have done Augusta good. But now that is all at an end, and there's nothing left for me but to stagger after her coffin in despair!" With this he had a regular fit of crying.

"Do be comforted, Herr Weigelt," said I to him soothingly; "who would give heed to what cards said about such matters? Your Augusta is still alive, and with God's help all will yet be well. There are women who look as weak as if a breath of wind would blow them over, and yet have seven or eight children, and are quite hearty. Your Augusta is by no means so very delicate. I've but one fault to find with her—and that's her mother, that Frau Bergfeldt."

"You are probably right there, dear Frau Buchholz," replied Herr Weigelt drying his tears, "it was frightfully imprudent of her to torment Augusta with such melancholy forebodings. And now that I come to think of it, Augusta is really not so delicate. She has, in fact, fair physical strength. Six months ago she could lift up the small cane-bottomed chair with outstretched arm. Dear Frau Buchholz, I know you to be kind, and I'm sure that for Augusta's sake you will come over to us and see that things are done rightly when the time comes? It is

this I wanted to ask you to do for us, and this is why I came to you."

"But still you can't leave her own mother out of consideration," I remarked.

"If you wish my Augusta to be murdered, then say so—but I know that you will not and cannot do that. You have always thought so well of her!"

"Well, well," said I in reply, "we had better go at once, so that I can have a talk with Augusta and see what she requires."

At that moment there was a violent ring at the door bell. "That is Carl!" said I, but I was mistaken, for Betti came running in and said that a porter had called with a message, asking Herr Weigelt to return home as quickly as possible.

When the poor fellow heard this, every vestige of colour left his face. His eyes looked glassy and his lips trembled. "Be a man," said I to him, "and keep up your spirits. Fetch a cab at once. I shall be ready and waiting in a couple of minutes."

He fetched a cab and we drove off; but that drive I shall never in my life forget. First he exclaimed: "I am a murderer!" Then he moaned like a criminal about to be executed. Then he called out: "We shall only be in time to see her a lifeless corpse!" At last I could stand it no longer, and said: "If you don't put an end to your ravings I shall stop the cab and leave you. Can't you wait and see how things

are before you begin your lamentations? It would be more sensible at all events.”—After this he gave himself up to simple sobbing.

When we got up to their abode, he was going to rush into the bedroom without more ado. “Stop!” I cried, and held him tight by the collar of his coat. “Such things are for womanfolk to attend to; you men have nothing to do with them. You would only frighten Augusta by your vehemence. I will go in first and come and let you know how things are.” And with these words I opened the bedroom door gently and went in.

What he did meanwhile I don’t know; it’s to be hoped he employed his time well by thinking seriously about himself. When I got back to him I had good news for him.—“Come with me, now,” I whispered, “Augusta wants to see you.” He went in, but made a halt at the door and did not seem to have courage to go farther. For, there before him in the lap of a strange woman, who was sitting on a low chair before a small bath, lay a little living creature, a human babe, whom the woman was wrapping up in soft linen and swaddling clothes. But Augusta stretched out her hand to him and said in a low voice: “Franz.” He sank on his knees beside her bed and covered her hand with kisses, and then kissed her on the mouth, saying: “My sweet, my dear little wife!”

The new-born babe now began to cry and Herr Weigelt regularly pricked up his ears, and gave a good long look at the little wrinkled, red-brownish creature whose small face seemed more like one of last year's apples than the countenance of a human being in the first stage of its existence. My children at that age were much prettier, and the youngest, especially, was like an angel.

"Come sir," said the strange woman, "give a look at the boy—it's your first!"—"A boy," he stammered—"my boy?" The woman laughed. "Wud ye like to tak him up?" she asked. "If only I don't break it," he said, taking hold of the infant most awkwardly. "Na, na, you'd better leave it," said the woman; "you'll have to learn to play the father better than that—you don't know how yet! But now the child and mother must have a sleep. I'm thinking that door out there had better be closed?"

He seemed glad to obey these directions, and we then attended to the mother and baby. When they were both settled to rest, our next business was to attend to the father, for it was somewhat past supper-time already. In the kitchen I found the servant-girl, and told her to go out and fetch a bottle of rum, but added not to ask for a bottle as a pint would be cheaper. I gave her money for it and off the girl trotted.

I thought that if Herr Weigelt had a little cordial

it would do him good, after all the anxiety he had been in. My Carl always has his glass of grog when anything out of the way happens. For the midwife and nurse I made coffee—it's what they like best; buttered rolls too were not wanting, so no one came off with too little.

We sat down to supper, I, the midwife and Herr Weigelt. The servant-girl had fetched the rum in a milk jug because, she said, I had specially asked her not to get a bottle. A terribly stupid creature, to be sure.

Herr Weigelt found it excellent, and was very pleased when we two experienced women assured him that Augusta had got over it splendidly and that he might now quite well have the birth announced in the newspapers with the word "safely." He was greatly delighted that it was a boy, and said: "He will have to be called Franz after me, that's to say if Augusta would like it too."

Hereupon I said: "Herr Weigelt, I do not know whether your grog is to your taste, but there is sugar on the table, and the girl can bring you more hot water, and you can add what you like. As to the baby's name, you can talk that matter over with your wife to-morrow—she is scarcely equal to that yet."

Augusta had given me the key of her linen press, so that I might give out what was necessary, and I

found other things to attend to; thus Herr Weigelt was left to himself. I do wish now that I had looked after him, for that senseless girl—as I found out afterwards—in place of taking him a jug of hot water as I had told her, had placed the jug of rum beside him, and he, not thinking what he was about, had added rum to his glass instead of water.

I was in the kitchen, talking to the midwife, when I suddenly heard singing. On hurrying to the sitting-room I soon found what was up. The excitement, the rum, and the inborn helplessness of the man had done their worst. Herr Weigelt was fuddled.

“I shall go to Augusta,” he said, as I entered; “she is an angel!” and then sang out: “She alone it is I love; yes, she alone!”

“Do you wish to kill your wife and the infant with all this uproar?” said I hastily to him. “You are a perfect cannibal!”

“Oh, Wilhelmine, I am so fond of you!” said he. “Come, dear old soul, and give me a kiss!”

I avoided him with all the dignity I could muster, saying: “Are you not ashamed of yourself, Herr Weigelt, you just become a father, and now behaving like this? Shame upon you—before Augusta, before the nurse, before the new servant-girl, and above all before your own infant!”

“It hasn’t got any eyes yet,” replied he.

I let him know the impropriety of this remark of his, and said I hoped he didn't class his child among field-mice and puppies, which, as far as I knew, *were* born blind. Enough, I was very angry with him, and told him the best thing he could do was to go to bed, and implored him in the name of the heads of his family to keep quiet. At last he became reasonable. I hurried to Augusta, who had awakened and was asking what all the noise was about.

I told her that her husband was quite beside himself for joy that everything had gone so well, but that I had now persuaded him to go to bed without disturbing her. To think of my having had to expose myself to all sorts of unpleasantnesses, and even to tell falsehoods, simply because that senseless girl Trina had set a jug of rum before him!

After a while I thought to myself: "He'll now very likely be in bed," and considered it my duty to see whether he had put out his candle properly. But not a bit of it—my young man was very far from being asleep or in bed either. There he sat on his made-up bed, and had an open book in his hands which he had taken out of the bookshelf. "Herr Weigelt, are you not going to get to bed?"—"Oh, Frau Buchholz," he groaned, "the poor child, the poor child!"

"And what's the matter next?" I asked.

"I knocked up against that bookshelf in coming

in," said he, "and this book fell into my hands. Oh, the poor child! He will have to attend the Academy. I learned out of this grammar myself—it's Greek—and he will have to learn Greek. He will never get to understand those verbs in 'mi'—I myself never could. And they will flog him, and he's so small and can't stand being touched. I'll kill the schoolmaster that lays a hand on the child! It's my boy—nobody's but mine! Do you know the verbs in 'mi'?"

"Herr Weigelt," I replied with dignity, "I do not know what insult this question of yours may contain, and so will waste no words with you about it. But I ask you to make haste and get to bed. Take off your boots first. Now then, let me help you take off your coat and your waistcoat. I'm a married woman, and don't mind so far. You'll manage the rest, I should think; more I cannot do—it would go against my feelings of delicacy." With this I left him alone.

After a quarter of an hour I looked in upon him again. And of course, just as I thought, he had left the light burning and was snoring away like a saw-mill. When my Carl snores I put a round, narrow sofa pillow under his head—that does some good; but, as I couldn't see anything of the kind here, I pushed the stupid old grammar under Augusta's husband's head. Then I took away the light and

thought to myself: "What a very different kind of man my Carl is, after all!"

Augusta was asleep when I crept on tip-toe into the bedroom once more, to see that all was right. When I went up to the cradle and was about to bend over the little one, she opened her eyes; so even in her sleep she must have been conscious that some one was approaching her babe. She looked up at me, and, notwithstanding the dim light, I noticed the supreme happiness that sparkled from her eyes, and the unutterable joy that was shed over her face. She really looked pretty at that moment, but otherwise she cannot exactly complain of being beautiful. I nodded to her in a kindly way, and then went off home.

CHAPTER X

FRAU BUCHHOLZ LAYS A TRAP FOR THE DOCTOR, AND
FINDS HERSELF VERY AWKWARDLY PLACED

I CONSIDERED myself bound to let the doctor see that we did not value him merely as a family physician, but that we also regarded him as a friend of the family. Hence I invited him, in a friendly way, to take a spoonful of soup with us on Sunday next. Of course this did not mean that he was merely expected to soup, so I added that we had received a present from Mecklenburg of a leg of veal twenty pounds in weight, which could be properly enjoyed only by connoisseurs.

"Wilhelmine, what piece of deception is this of yours, about a leg of veal?" exclaimed Carl, when I handed him my note of invitation for approval.

"Oh, never mind that, it will be there when the time comes," I replied; "and nobody need weigh it on the dinner table."

Carl shook his head disapprovingly, but I gave

him to understand that there were things which men had better leave women to manage. The doctor had to be invited, that was certain; we owed it to him and to ourselves.

The doctor accepted. He wrote to say that by five in the afternoon he would have got through all his business, and would be delighted to come. From this note it was clear how conscientious he is about his practice; there are doctors who do not do any kind of work on a Sunday, whether they are called in specially, or whether accidental work comes in their way. A medical man like Dr. Wrenzchen, with such sterling ideas, could not fail to be welcomed in any family.

Carl asked me whether Uncle Fritz had not better be invited too, but this suggestion was met with only a knowing smile from me. I had no idea of having a party, I wanted him alone—the doctor—all to ourselves. This time he should not escape me! I arranged in good time about the roast, and Sunday came when the week had done its work.

At three o'clock I pushed the roast into the oven with my own hands. Emmi happened to be in the kitchen, and asked me whether she might run across to the Bergfeldts and ask them to come in to dinner. Fancy the girl's innocence! she had no notion whatever of the day's importance. I embraced her, tears filled my eyes, and my voice was choky. I could

only point to the oven without uttering a word—did not my child's whole future depend upon what was stewing there?

Thereupon Emmi remarked: "I don't wonder at your being unhappy about the veal, mamma, it will never be done in time; we have never had such a large piece in the house. And none of us like it."—"There's somebody that does though!" I exclaimed knowingly. "But run away, dear, and dress yourself prettily. Put on your puffed velvet bodice; and the flowers I brought from the market for you, put in your hair. They are orange-blossoms."—"They are not effective," replied Emmi. "They are symbolical, my dear. In Italy a bride's wreath is always made of them. But come, run away, child." Emmi coloured up to her ears, looked at me in surprise, and then went away. I turned to the roast, which was already beginning to brown, and said to the cook: "Jette, in ten minutes it'll have to be basted for the first time. I am most anxious for it to be good." "So am I, mum; you may go and dress with an easy mind—I'll take good care of it."

The table was laid and everything ready. Carl looked so neat and tidy that I gave him a kiss, and our girls looked angelic, especially Emmi in her steel-blue velvet. "Just like a pretty little doctor's wife!" I whispered to Carl. The nearer the hands of the clock moved towards five, the more anxious I be-

came; for what if the doctor were yet to send a message that he was prevented from coming? What if some patient had sent for him? Then, too, I was afraid lest the roast might get burnt, or that the exquisite cream sauce might get spoilt. These thoughts made me fly to the kitchen. But I found Jette basting the roast with the most loving care: it was looking perfection. We put the sauce through a strainer, added a small teaspoonful of arrowroot to thicken it, and put in a bit of fresh butter to make it mellow and tasty. "The doctor will lick all his ten fingers," thought I, grinning to myself; and Jette grinned too, as if her thoughts had been much the same as mine.

Punctually at five the doctor came. A perfect weight fell from my heart. "You must take us just as we are, dear doctor," said I; "some friends were coming, but unfortunately——" Here, however, Carl interrupted me—he so hates those convenient white lies—and said: "The smaller the circle the more sociable we can be." And the doctor added, laughing: "If only one's heart be black." * So amidst merriment and laughter we went in to dinner. I took in the doctor, opposite to him was

* This remark refers to an anecdote of a peasant who appeared at a funeral in his usual red waistcoat in place of mourning clothes, and upon being asked how this happened, the man replied that he did not think it mattered, "if only his heart were black."

Emmi's place, Carl was on his left on account of having to serve the soup, and Betti was on my other side.

We began with simple homely soup served with Marx and port-wine, which the doctor pronounced excellent. Then we had bass with oyster-sauce (of course only tinned American oysters), and then came the roast veal. Napoleon must have greeted the pyramids with the same kind of smile as the doctor did that leg of veal. At a wink from me Emmi and Betti smiled too, although both were on the point of making wry faces. I knew I had got at the doctor's weak side; and even though—as Fritz says—he gulps down anything that is wet and praises it too—still, Carl had certainly provided capital wines: a bottle of Johannisberg at one mark the bottle to the fish, and a Château la Pancha at one mark thirty. The doctor declared a nail might be hammered into him if he ever wished to have better wine. We were uncommonly merry; I was especially pleased that the doctor talked to Emmi and told her anecdotes he had read in the papers. We knew all the stories, of course, for we take in the same paper, but still I could pay him a compliment by saying that he had a wonderful memory.

When we had finished dinner we had coffee in the adjoining room, and the gentlemen lit their cigars. Carl then asked the doctor kindly to excuse his ab-

senting himself for half an hour or so, for he had important business to attend to. This was true enough, for he had to go over the accounts of his district. Betti went off to the Bergfeldts' without taking leave, and Jette I sent with a piece of the fish to the Weigelts' in the Acker Strasse. I knew she could not be back much under an hour. When they were all safely off, I begged the doctor to excuse me for a few minutes, as I wanted just to run across to a neighbour for a minute.

The truth however is that I never left the house at all, but, after slamming the house door, I crept back on tip-toe, and hid myself in the store-room. There I sat down on a kitchen chair.

"He has taken his food and drink well," thought I; "if he has a spark of gratitude for what he has enjoyed, he will offer her now his heart and hand. But"—such were my doubts—"are there not some people who think nothing of an invitation, who even consider it a sacrifice on their part to have to meet other people they don't care about?" In front of me on the table stood a dish with white beans. I took up a handful, thinking: "If I find them in pairs, the two will to-day come to some understanding with each other." I sorted the beans on the table. There were twenty-seven. Not in pairs, therefore. "The first time doesn't count, however," thought I. Now for the second; there were fourteen!

All good things are three, says the proverb. Quite lost in the sorting of the beans, I heard and saw nothing of the world beyond, when suddenly two strong arms were thrown round me, and some one gave me such a smacking kiss that my ears seemed to roar. I jumped up. In the twilight I saw that some military creature—a regular seven-footer—was standing before me. “Who are you, and what do you want here?” I asked in a commanding voice. He drew himself up into position and blustered out: “Corporal Gehren of the Guards.”—“And what is it you want here?” I exclaimed. “Jette asked me to come in this evening for some roast veal.”—“That girl Jette?” I cried, enraged. “She is absolutely forbidden to have any lover in the kitchen!”—“I’m not her lover; she’s only my sister!” replied the young Goliath. “Your sister,” said I in wrath, “that’s an untruth. The way you caught me in your arms is not the way a sister is embraced; it’s more than my Carl would venture to do. Be off with you!” He wouldn’t go, however, and kept ogling the roast veal which he had discovered on the table, and which I thought of having sliced later with the punch-bowl—that is to say, if things could be brought far enough for us to celebrate the betrothal. “Be off!” I exclaimed again; “be off, or I’ll call for help!”

Overcome by the insult, my wrath and vexation, I

cried out: "Murder, burglars, thieves, help!"—The soldier no sooner perceived that I was in earnest than he speedily disappeared down the back staircase. The doctor and Emmi came hurrying in. What was I to do?—The truth could not be told. I muttered something about a fright and ghosts, and pretended to feel faint. Emmi was quite distracted at seeing me in this unusual plight, but thought I to myself: "Wilhelmine, act cunningly, for no doctor with a sense of duty and a conscience could be so wicked as to forsake a suffering creature, when only a short time before he enjoyed an abundance of roast veal and was extremely well pleased with the wine he got."—So I recovered but slowly, and told them I must have got frightened by the kitchen towel in the dark.—How could I confess that in place of going out I had sat down in the store-room to act the spy? And could I have said a syllable about the outrageous attack of the soldier, who had taken me for Jette?—No, never!

The doctor was charming to me; it is verily a pleasure to be a patient of his. He said that a fright such as I had had was only external, and would soon go off. He regretted not to be able to stay longer, but said he was obliged to look in upon a patient who had a fixed idea every Sunday evening that he was catching a salmon. Before sending him to Dalldorf he wanted to see if the man's fancies could

not be got rid of by some of the rules of medical art. As he would not be persuaded to remain I had, with a heavy heart, to let him go.

When he was gone, I said to Emmi: "Well, and how did you get on together?"—"Oh, very well."—"And what did you talk about?"—"He said at first that he fancied he smelt orange-blossoms in the room, and also said he couldn't bear the smell, for when he was a child he once had medicine given to him in orange-blossom water, and since then he detested the smell."—"What did you say to that?"—"I told him that I would take the blossoms out of my hair, but he said he could hardly expect me to do that. However, I did, and he came and sat beside me."—"Well, and then?"—"He told me all sorts of things about his dear father and dear mother, who, he said, was always telling him that she would like nothing better than for him to bring her a daughter-in-law."—"And he said no more?" I asked breathlessly.—"Well, just as he was saying that we heard your screams, mamma, and hurried to see what was the matter."

Everything turned black before me, and I sank down on the sofa as if crushed. So near the goal—the wished-for words had been on his lips when fate, in the shape of a hungry warrior, cruelly stepped in between! My first thought was to have Jette packed off to the police-station as soon as she came back, for

it was clear she had left the back door open for any armed creature to enter the house. But I did not dare to do this. What would my Carl, my children, Dr. Wrenzchen, and even Fritz have said to my having of my own accord banished myself in the store-room? It would all have come out! Horrible!

And Jette has since that evening been so impudent and saucy that I have scarcely dared to say a word to her; and, besides, I don't go near the kitchen of an evening now, for fear of coming across the soldier. Thus, in place of the anticipated happiness, I have reaped nothing but vexation and annoyance, and who knows when I may have the chance of getting the doctor here again? I feel very much down-hearted and humbled, but, nevertheless, I don't mean to give up the struggle against fate to get the doctor.

P.S. The doctor did *not* go to see a patient that evening. He was at the Café Helbich playing *skat* with his chums. Uncle Fritz met him there, and told me that "catching salmon" meant playing *skat* for beer. So he has deceived me, in spite of the roast veal and the bass with oyster-sauce. I should just like to see him dare do this as my son-in-law; I would soon get him out of the habit of "catching salmon"!

CHAPTER XI

AUGUSTA WEIGELT'S BABY IS CHRISTENED AND THE PASTOR JOINS THE MATCHMAKERS

THE Weigelts' baby's name had of course been entered at the registry office, but it was getting high time for it to be properly baptised, and not, any longer, to face each new day a young heathen child. The delay had had its good reasons, for Herr Weigelt's father is a country clergyman somewhere on the Pomeranian coast, and of course the Weigelts wished the grandfather to baptise the grandson; but old Herr Weigelt had found it difficult to get a few days' leave. He had written now, however, to say that he could come, and had mentioned the day of his arrival in Berlin.

Young Weigelt explained this all to me the day he came to ask Emmi to stand godmother to his boy. Of course I gave my consent to this, for Emmi and Augusta have always been very good friends, and moreover anything more charming than a young and

pretty godmother cannot be imagined. It ranks next to a bridesmaid, although in my eyes to be a bride stands considerably higher still.

When young Weigelt told me that his father was coming I naturally asked where he was going to stay, as I knew their accommodation was limited, and a christening gives rise to all kinds of additional trouble in a house. "Oh, Frau Buchholz, you have always been so kind to us, and I know have a spare room! If you would allow my dear old father to live with you, I should be more grateful to you than I can say. My mother-in-law has unfortunately no room to offer him either." I considered a minute or two, and then said: "We shall be pleased to receive your father into our house. Indeed, he shall be exceedingly welcome, but I must ask you for a favour in return."—"I will gladly do anything I can."—"Well, what I want you to do is to ask Dr. Wrenzen to stand godfather. You know him; now will you do this?"—"I will do all in my power," replied Herr Weigelt, "even though we have to drag him on with a pair of pincers." We both laughed at this cruel idea, which only a short time before had been the device of a murderer for killing his customers. After this Herr Weigelt took his departure, happy in the extreme.

When he had gone, I thought to myself: "Wilhelmine, this idea of yours is worth its weight in

gold. The doctor can't escape you. And that Emmi shall look a young fairy you are pretty sure to manage."

The following day Herr Weigelt came again. "He has consented!" he called out to me as soon as he entered the front door.—"Without much shuffling?" I asked.—"On the contrary, as soon as he heard that Fräulein Emmi was to stand godmother, he accepted forthwith, and looked as pleased as if he had had his hand full of trumps!"—"That is capital," thought I; "he seems himself to have made up his mind that his time is come!" We then discussed all sorts of practical matters about the christening festival. I promised to lend him our punch-bowl and glasses, and whatever else they might require, for the Bergfeldts' bowl had of course got a knock when they were moving into their new house, and it cannot again appear on the table without blushing. In my joy I would have lent him everything out of our best room, had that been possible.

After this we began to arrange our spare room for old Herr Weigelt's visit. The girls maintained that it would be desperately tiresome to have a parson in the house, as, of course, no one would venture to utter a merry word, and we should all have to look solemn. I said to them, however, with a knowing look: "Children, after rain comes sunshine; after the bitter food you shall have pure honeycomb. But

I want you to get out your hymn-books and put them on the work-table—that will make a good impression. You, Emmi, shall have a white dress with pale blue trimmings. Light blue is your colour. The dress will come in for your dancing-parties next winter; and, mark me, it won't be thrown away." This was on Friday.

Hence we had time enough for getting the dress ready, for Herr Weigelt was not to arrive till the following Tuesday afternoon, and the christening was to be on the Wednesday.

When the old gentleman arrived, of course he first paid his children a visit and then came on to us, accompanied by his son. At first I felt a little nervous, not being accustomed to have much to do with clergymen; however, old Herr Weigelt had such hearty and winning ways that in ten minutes we felt as comfortable as if we had known each other for years. When we went in to supper he gallantly offered me his arm, and upon taking his first glass of wine he said that he must be allowed to drink to the health of the family of whom he had heard so much good from his son and daughter-in-law. In his children's names, therefore, he begged to thank them for their many acts of kindness. In answer to this my Carl said that so much praise he was sure would quite embarrass me, whereupon old Herr Weigelt held out his hand to me, gave mine a hearty

shake, and said he knew quite well what he was about, and that he had not said one word too much.

After supper I addressed myself to Herr Weigelt junior, and implored him, for Heaven's sake, to look up Dr. Wrenzchen again and to remind him of his consent, and of his duty as a Christian. So he went off somewhat early. Old Herr Weigelt chatted with my daughters.

My daughters having retired, I said to Herr Weigelt confidentially: "Dear sir, to-morrow you will have to do with a godfather who is a most pleasant man, and one whom I could welcome as a son-in-law, but the wickednesses of Berlin life have ensnared him. Do, I beg you, address yourself a little to his conscience, and set forth to him the joys of married life in pretty bright colours. If he stands godfather he cannot but listen to what you say." The parson considered for a few minutes and then said: "I will do my best to lead him on to the right road."—"You will be doing a good work," I replied, "for you have no idea how corrupt the young men in Berlin are. My own brother Fritz would be none the worse for a word of warning!"

Next day was the christening. The Weigelts had arranged it all very nicely, and everything looked so cheerful and neat in their rooms that I was really astonished to find that a few flowerpots and happy faces could make a house appear quite festive, small

though it be. Among those present were all the Bergfeldts, of course, from A to Z, Herr and Frau Krause with their boy Eduard, Uncle Fritz, their landlord, a Herr Meyer, with his wife and daughter, a couple of friends of young Weigelt's, among them a Herr Theophile, who was studying chemistry, and who played all kinds of tricks later in the day. Then there were ourselves and Dr. Wrenzchen, so that the room was as full as an omnibus on a rainy day. For the convenience of Dr. Wrenzchen the christening was fixed for six o'clock, and with the stroke of six he entered. Herr Bergfeldt held his grandson, and Dr. Wrenzchen and Emmi stood right and left of him.

The old clergyman began his address. He said that the gently slumbering infant might be likened to a young bud which was to develop in the great garden of humanity, and that the godparents were expected to undertake the gardener's duty in order that the blossom might give pleasure to the owner of the garden. He then turned to the godparents and said that the duty they had undertaken to perform, meant, in reality, that their *protégé* demanded something of them. He knew, he said, that Berlin—like Babylon of old—was full of temptations which specially threatened to destroy all those who went their own way without considering others. There was to be found lurking the gambling table, drink,

and sin, all dragging young persons into the abyss. One thing only could save them, and that was a home of their own, the care of others in grief, in need, and in trouble. The trials which married life brought with it would lead those hurrying to their destruction back to the right path, and to contrition. Therefore let every young man take upon himself the yoke of marriage, in order that he may escape the snares of evil company, and renounce the follies of life.

I was beginning to feel as if cold water were running down my back, for the good man was going further than I had calculated upon, but now that he had started there was no means of holding him back. Dr. Wrenzen was listening pretty attentively, but did not seem very much edified.

Then the formal christening took place, and the infant Franz was carried back to the bedroom.

I was curious to see what effect the address would have upon the doctor. The good parson had meant too well; I do not in any way consider the doctor as completely lost as he had represented; but when parsons begin to talk about sin they generally paint it pretty black.

The table was speedily laid, and we took our seats. Dr. Wrenzen handed Emmi to her place, and I must say the girl looked lovely. The clergyman's place was on the sofa beside Frau Bergfeldt.

Augusta had prepared quite a nice little dinner; we all enjoyed it, and when we had warmed up a little the drinking of healths began. Herr Krause proposed the health of the parents, my Carl that of old Herr Weigelt—and very well he did it—and old Herr Weigelt that of the godparents. Uncle Fritz asked us to drink to the health of the four Franzes: the infant, the father, the grandfather, and Dr. Wrenzchen—whose Christian name was likewise Franz—and added that if things went on at this rate there would one day be an Imperial Franz-regiment in the family. This made us all laugh most heartily, and Dr. Wrenzchen coloured up rather—the doctor talked to Emmi, to be sure, but it seemed to me in rather a reserved and cool kind of way. This made me a little uneasy.

After supper some of the gentlemen rose and lighted their cigars, and I took a seat by the doctor. “Well, dear doctor,” said I, “and how did you like the christening address?”

“It has given me a good deal to think about,” he answered; “but the fact is, dear Frau Buchholz, I like my personal freedom, without actually following sinful ways. I should think well over the matter before I put myself under the guardianship of even the most excellent of mothers-in-law. Heaven only knows who put the old gentleman up to his speech, but I must say he has not succeeded in mak-

ing me wish to take upon myself the yoke of cares! Nor can I imagine that you would welcome a villainous son-in-law."

There now, I knew it! That was an evident refusal. Why had not the old gentleman understood the doctor better? He might surely have known that delicate affairs required delicate handling.

CHAPTER XII

EMIL BERGFELDT BREAKS OFF HIS ENGAGEMENT AND
THE DOCTOR IS FALSELY ACCUSED OF RUDENESS

I HAD never been anywhere by the City Railway, nor had the children, so I said to Carl that nothing surely would be more delightful than to make use of the first day in Whitsuntide for a trip, and to go part of the way by the City line. I said that this would be cheaper than anything else, and that moreover it would be instructive as well as interesting. We should also avoid the crowds of common people who generally make more use of the Whit-Monday.

Carl raised no objections to the proposal. I sent Betti to the Bergfeldts to see if they would go with us, but Betti returned with only a half sort of answer, and looked so queer about the eyes that I felt a smell of burning, although I did not yet know of what. It came out afterwards what it was.

“Why did the Bergfeldts not decide definitely?”

I asked.—“They considered the City line too commonplace!”—“Even if *we* went with them!” I replied sharply, and asked further: “Is your Emil coming with us then?”—She was silent.—“Or are you going with the Bergfeldts?”—Again silence.

“A lover surely doesn’t leave his sweetheart on such a day!” I added.—“I didn’t see Emil,” she replied.—“Then ask him to-morrow morning.”—“Perhaps,” she answered.—“What do you mean by perhaps!” I exclaimed. “Have you quarrelled? Have you fallen out with each other?”—“No,” said Betti in a low voice.—“Well, what then? What’s the matter? Let me hear what you have got to say.”—“Nothing,” she whispered, and then burst out crying, and looked as if she were about to faint.

I did everything that is usually done in such a case: I fetched Eau de Cologne, I unfastened her dress, which was a little tight, and petted her till she came back to herself. “Now, come, dear, tell me what has happened,” I asked. “You can surely confide everything to your mother?”—“No,” she cried, “no, no, do not ask me, it is dreadful.”

There arose in my mind all sorts of horrible ideas, but I put on a smile, although I felt my heart ready to break.

“The best thing will be for you to get married soon,” I said at last. “Shall we have the wedding in the autumn?”

The look the child gave me I shall never in my life forget. Betti has such pretty brown eyes, like a gazelle's, but she looked at me as if hurt to death, so piteously, so sorrowfully, it cut me to the heart. "Never," she said, "never."—"Well now," I exclaimed, "but he *shall* marry you as sure as my name's Wilhelmine!"—"But I won't have him," answered Betti.—"This is a pretty story," said I; "and pray why won't you have him?"—"Because I hate him, I despise him! Oh, oh, he . . . !" Upon this she had a succession of attacks of fainting, and I had to put her to bed. What had taken place I could not discover, but Betti is somewhat obstinate by nature, and what she won't tell, she won't. She answered never a word to all my questions, and I was left as wise as before.

To Carl I did not say anything about this new trouble. I thought, when once I know myself what it really is, he shall be told. All the more eagerly did I make the necessary preparations for our Whit-Sunday's trip, especially as on the following morning Betti was looking much as usual. The corners of her mouth did certainly seem to droop a little, and she looked very black under her eyes.

We ladies had, of course, dressed ourselves simply, but still pleasantly to look at. Emmi looked charming in her new *crétonne*, so much so that I wished Dr. Wrenzchen could by some chance have met her.

Betti was dressed exactly like Emmi, and my dress was dove-coloured, with red fuchsias upon it, which is the fashion just now. Carl looked splendid, as he always does.

Our destination was the restaurant on the Halen-See, for, to speak honestly, I am sick of Bernau and Biesenthal, where the rules relating to the holiday-makers are too strict and the trees are no greener for it. Now, at the Halen-See not only is the best beer kept in ice, but there are ozone springs of the first quality in the neighbourhood. Moreover, we know the proprietor personally, and last winter when we were there he told me that the next time we came he would give us a dish of choice asparagus. He had, as we afterwards learned, promised this to a number of the acquaintances; but, of course, there is choice asparagus enough in the world, and a blessing it is both to restaurant-keepers and to the public as well.

We found a great many people, but were given a pretty table to ourselves with an exquisite view over the lake, upon which gondolas were flitting to and fro. Now and again a train sped away through the scenery on the horizon, while the foreground, as the poets say, was pleasantly enlivened by waiters in white aprons and a number of respectable people in festive attire.

We ordered asparagus for dinner forthwith, and

meanwhile contented ourselves with a glass of "genuine," and then took a walk in the park. We found this very amusing, and I can frankly say that our toilettes created a good deal of attention. We then went on to the skittle-ground, and to our great surprise found several acquaintances there. Herr Kleines, a doctor from Hamburg who was introduced to us, and seemed a highly cultivated man, and some others also. But who should we find sitting at the marker's table when we arrived but Dr. Wrenzchen! I bowed to him in a cordial way, but he did not come near us, only nodded his head with a forced kind of smile. All the others were polite enough to pay us some compliment, but he remained sitting where he was as if glued to his seat; this, naturally, I considered very disrespectful. The party invited Carl to join in the game, but he declined, for he said they were the right number without him. Hereupon Dr. Wrenzchen said that he would gladly give up his place. "Oh," said I, "if you are not going to play, dear doctor, would you take us out in a boat for a little? I know you like sailing." He looked quite perplexed and made all sorts of excuses, and his comrades, especially Herr Kleines, laughed in a most provoking manner, so that I could do nothing else but catch hold of Carl somewhat sharply, and drag him away, for he suddenly seemed inclined to join the game.

"Can't you see that we are not wanted?" said I angrily. "That doctor has acted contrary to the first rules of politeness; he didn't even rise when we came, and yet he has enjoyed that beautiful roast veal at our house. Herr Kleines, too, seemed inclined to go into a fit of laughter when, ironically, I asked the doctor to take us out in a boat. The young men of the present day are a vulgar set, that's my opinion."

In a word, I was greatly annoyed. "Rage away at them, Mina, till you feel better," said my sweet-tempered Carl.

Oh, where is there a husband as tender in his feelings as my Carl? I was about to add a few more remarks, not altogether of the sugar-candy kind, but the words stuck in my throat like a hot potato. For a carriage drove up in front of the park gates, and in it sat Frau Bergfeldt—Frau Bergfeldt in blue silk, lying back in an affected way in the cushion like a magnum bonum plum, and beside her sat a thinnish lady. On the back seat sat Herr Bergfeldt with a young girl, who, to judge by the length of her nose, was the daughter of the thin woman opposite to her. Emil was sitting on the box, and looked as boldly out into the world as if he had won a prize in the great lottery.

"They come out in a carriage, and we travel third class by the City line!" I exclaimed, but got no further, for Betti had become pale as death.—"Betti,

my child," I cried, "what is the matter? Carl, fetch the doctor. Drag him from the skittle-ground here by the neck-tie. You see we need him!"—Carl flew off.—"Betti, you frighten me; what is it, dear child? I'll forgive you everything."—"It's over now," said Betti; "I now know enough! Do not be anxious, mother dear. You see I'm quite well again!"—"Let us go home now," said I.—"No, please stay," she exclaimed firmly. "He shall not say that I grieve one moment on his account."—"Who?"—"He, whom I now hate—Emil!"

Carl returned, but without the doctor. He sent a message to say he would come when it got darker. "He needn't trouble himself," I replied sharply; "and moreover we don't require his services now. Carl, I may tell you briefly that Betti and Emil have fallen out, and, what's more, we ought to be glad of it. I never thought much of that poverty-stricken family. To see Betti thrown away upon such a penniless would-be judge. A pretty thing, to be sure! To-morrow you will have to write to Bergfeldt and tell him that we wish the engagement broken off; or, better still, I'll go and tell her so in words that'll make her ears buzz like telegraph wires!"

"Betti, what do you say to all this?" asked Carl, taking the girl by the arm and drawing her to him.—"I only hope that Emil will be happy with the young

lady to whom he has now given his affection, and that she—may be too,” was her reply.

“Oh, ho! so it’s on account of somebody else, is it?” I exclaimed—“on account of that long, scraggy person who sat in the carriage—such a damsel, such a bag of bones! Well, I never!”

I do not think that my frame of mind could have been called gracious at that moment. Still, to a certain extent I was thankful to know what it was that had been worrying Betti for some time past, and, above all, that we should now and for ever be rid of the Bergfeldts. We remained so as to have our asparagus; but we started home earlier than we had originally intended. Asparagus, however tender it may be, when eaten with vexation, lies like lead on the stomach.

At home Carl found a letter from Herr Bergfeldt, four pages long—three pages in beating about the bush; and then he wound up by declaring that his son had been obliged to look about him for a wife with money, and had met with what he wanted; that his engagement to Betti had been entered upon in the thoughtless manner of youths; that our Betti could, of course, make a far better match than by marrying Emil.—“*She* dictated that to him, I’m pretty sure!” I exclaimed after reading the letter.

How long I remained in a state of rage I do not remember, but it was a good thing for the Berg-

feldts that none of the lot came near me, for something like mischief was brewing in the air. Betti was the most composed of the party! She told us how she had gradually noticed a change in Emil's behaviour towards her, that Frau Bergfeldt had once or twice spoken of the poor prospects of law-students, and about the advisability of their looking out for rich wives, and that she herself had long since felt that it must all come to an end. She assured us, moreover, that now the uncertainty was over she could take things more quietly, and be happier than she had been. This pacified me.

When Carl and I were alone we talked the matter over seriously. He too thought it best that the engagement should be broken off.

"Had I had my way, Betti would never have been engaged to Emil," said I. "Those to blame are Uncle Fritz and your own soft heart. And as for the doctor," I added, "he may stay where he is. Anything more rude than he was to-day I have never met with in my life. Never rising to meet me, and not coming even when told that my child is ill!"

"He couldn't, Wilhelmine, with the best of wills."

"If he had wanted to he could!"

"He really could not."

"And why not, pray?"

"He had burst his trousers in playing at skittles."

He asked me to present his sincerest regards to you and your daughters meanwhile."

I was glad, I confess, to find that good reasons had really prevented the doctor from paying us his respects, but I should like to know why he need go to a tailor who cuts his things too scrimp. That'll have to be altered.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH AN ACCIDENT LEADS TO A FATEFUL
MEETING BETWEEN BETTI AND A YOUNG MAN

Betti and her mother went into the country, to Tegel, for the summer, this time leaving Emmi with Carl; for Betti was moping on account of the behaviour of Emil. Frau Krause and her boy Eduard were also there and Betti had a pet rabbit to console her.

OF course we were provided with books to read. Uncle Fritz had been asked to get us Humboldt's "Cosmos." When he brought it he said: "Wilhelmine, you will find it beyond you." But I gave it him nicely for that speech, by saying to him:

"I have often enough, unfortunately, observed that you undervalue the capacities of women, because you are a free-thinker, but the fact of your not understanding a thing is very far from proving that I may not be able to follow it!"

He laughed in a jeering kind of way, and said:

"I wish you joy with the 'Cosmos.' Send it me back soon, that it may be returned to the library."

This made me feel it a positive duty to read the "Cosmos." We therefore one day took it and the rabbit, which we had named Sniff, out into the woods, and Betti read aloud to me about the mountains in Mexico and about the strata of rocks that lie on the top. The first day I went to sleep over it, unfortunately, for the day was very hot; the second time we had had beans for dinner, which made us both feel drowsy. The third time Betti read very badly because Sniff was always trying to get off, and she had perpetually to be catching hold of him. We have now determined to leave the "Cosmos" till next winter, when we can read the book quietly at home; it would be ridiculous for it to be said that we couldn't understand a printed book! That is only presumption on the part of Uncle Fritz.

A new character who was destined to have great influence in the Buchholz family life now comes very dramatically on the scene. A little boy having been pushed by Eduard Krause into the lake, the work of rescue was performed by a young man who chanced to be there.

His companions went up to him and shook him by the hand, and then seemed to deliberate as to what they should do. I went up to them and said: "Gentlemen, I live close by, and will gladly attend to

your brave comrade. He cannot be allowed to remain in his wet clothes." They made some excuses, but they little knew me—and I did not give way.

They came with us. In front of our cottage they took leave of their friend and of us, saying, they would call towards evening for him, and meanwhile put up at the Castle Restaurant. One of the young men came forward, and, as they were leaving, laid his hand on his friend's shoulder, looked at him earnestly and affectionately, and said: "Take care of yourself, Felix." Those two must be good friends, thought I, and was pleased. The young men then went off towards the Castle and we turned indoors.

"Allow me now to introduce myself to you," said the young man as we entered the house. "My name is Felix Schmidt."

"And I am Frau Buchholz," said I. "But come in; this way to the bedroom. Here is a house-coat of my husband's and here are trousers and waistcoat, and here a night-shirt and socks. His slippers you will find in the corner over there. Just change your things and make yourself comfortable. Shall I make you a cup of coffee, or would you like some spirit?"

"Well, I don't think I should be any the worse for a little spirit."—"You shall have some then, but now make haste and get out of your wet things."

I went into the kitchen and made up a good fire.

After a while the door leading from the bedroom into the kitchen was opened, and Herr Felix Schmidt stood on the threshold.

"I am giving a great deal of trouble, I fear," he said, embarrassed.

"Not at all," said I, taking him by the arm; "but come this way to the sitting-room."

I got him to sit in the large armchair and looked at him as he sat there. In outward appearance he might have been my Carl, and yet again he was not. My Carl is dark, this young man is fair; my Carl wears whiskers, whereas he has a brown moustache, which suits him very well indeed. And yet they are alike, for my Carl looked just as fresh, and as young and blooming, when we first met each other, and when as yet I had never dreamt how much I should one day love him.

Meanwhile the kettle had boiled. The woman from the other side of the cottage was waiting for me in the kitchen, and asked whether she could be of any help. I was sorry now that I had always kept her at a little distance, and actually felt a little ashamed to think of it, but I gladly accepted her offer to assist me.

So we fetched Herr Schmidt's wet clothes, wrung them out, and hung them on the line in the garden, in the sun. His boots we stuck upon two poles. They had been full of water, and there was a large

pool of water on the floor where he had stood. The woman brought a mop and dried up the wet.

It was a blessing that Carl had brought out a bottle of good Meuckow cognac, for I could now brew the young fellow a delicious glass of grog. And so I did. For ourselves I made some strong coffee; we had had some already that afternoon, it is true, but needed something after our fright and excitement.

There in the sitting-room were Felix Schmidt and Betti when I entered with the grog. The two were talking away quite gaily together. I told him that I considered he had to-day saved a family from a great sorrow. He replied that any one would have done the same in his place. He said he had seen how the boy fell into the water and happened to be nearest the spot.

Betti asked if he had noticed how the boy got into the water.

Herr Felix Schmidt did not answer at once, but then asked was there not another boy on the pier beside him?

"Yes, there was," said Betti.

"Do you know the boy?"

"Oh, yes," said I, "and a regular good-for-nothing he is."

"I should not let him go about alone unless properly looked after," said Herr Schmidt.

"Why not?" I asked.

"He might fall in himself some day," he replied briefly.

"Oh, no," said I, smiling, "weeds are not so easily got rid of."

Herr Schmidt had finished his first glass, and so I went to mix him a second. The sun had meanwhile gone round a little, so the woman and I had to move the wet clothes. They were, however, drying fairly well. His linen would soon be ready for ironing, so I put the heaters in the fire. Betti came in and said that Herr Schmidt's cigars had all got soaked, and he would very much like a smoke.

"How do you know that?"

"Because I asked him."

"What made you think of that?"

"Well, Emil never could be a quarter of an hour without smoking."

"Your father's cigars are on the top of the wardrobe. Take in this brandy and water to him, and this bread-and-butter also—he must be hungry."

I could have shouted for joy when she was gone, for this was the first time for many weeks that Betti had mentioned Emil's name, and generally she was upset the moment any one spoke of him. So perhaps she is becoming indifferent to him—at last.

The heaters were now red hot, and I set about the ironing. His linen could not, of course, be made to

look as nice as it might have done if newly starched, but I could, at all events, show I was perfectly up in the art. His underclothing was good and neatly marked. The young man was tidy, that one could see. His waistcoat I ironed too. My Carl always wears white waistcoats in summer, and maintains that they are never so nice as when I do them up for him. Betti came in again with Herr Schmidt's watch, which was full of water and wouldn't go. "Does the time seem so long to him?" I asked. "No," she replied, "we were only saying how quickly it was passing, and this made him look at his watch." I hung the watch up above the fireplace; it was a valuable gold watch, not a mere latchkey such as I once found hanging at the end of Emil Bergfeldt's watch-chain. The Bergfeldts were, in fact, an utter mistake.

The woman of the house I had sent out to the butcher's, and she now came in with the cutlets, and set about peeling the potatoes. The clothes were getting dry, and wherever I could I made the irons help in this. It seemed to me almost as if I had been working for that beloved Carl of mine, and to work for him is my greatest pleasure in life. When ready, I laid the clothes tidily on my bed, and the boots were put beside it; the woman had given them a brush and made them look as bright as was possible.

"Herr Schmidt," said I, on going into the sitting-room, "everything now is in the loveliest state of confusion"—I didn't see why I mightn't make a little joke—"so this masquerading can now come to an end."

He was astonished to find how quickly we had put everything to rights for him; but then, do men understand anything about ironing, I should like to know?

Betti and I now laid the cloth in the front room, and moreover we laid places for seven persons—for Herr Schmidt and his four companions and our two selves. Wine we had in the house, and the woman provided us with glasses and plates. She behaved admirably, and I determined to be more sociable with her in future.

When Herr Felix had changed his things and came in to us he looked as if he had just stepped out of a band-box, so trim and neat was he. Really a splendid, handsome young fellow! His neck-tie was, however, missing, and I could not find one of Carl's. A happy thought struck Betti. She took my scissors and cut a strip off her ghostly veil and manufactured a most successful neck-tie, which she was obliged to put on for him, as he said he would not wear it otherwise.

By the time his friends came the potatoes were ready, and the cutlets were soon cooked also. They

all seemed to enjoy their supper, and we were a very merry party. Herr Felix's special friend raised his glass and said he wished in the name of all his comrades to drink the health of the hospitable family, and to thank them for the great kindness shown to their friend, so glasses were knocked together, and they drank to the welfare and happiness of the Buchholz family. I proposed a toast too, and said I only regretted that my Carl was not present, and hoped we might one day see them all here again. And they promised to come. We spent a delightful evening. But good-bye had to be said at last, and Herr Felix seemed really sorry to have to return to Berlin. But he had to be off in the end, and so followed the others, who had got a long start of him.

We cleared away the things and then sat down a little in front of our cottage. It was wonderfully beautiful, for nature does not go to sleep during these bright summer nights, only dozes as it were, for the morning comes so soon.

The trees and shrubs threw their perfume out into the night, and the crickets were chirping in the hedges.

I put my arms round Betti and she cuddled up to me in a way she had not done for long. We did not speak, both of us followed our own thoughts, and it was not till it had become very late, and the sky in the east had begun to grow light, that we went indoors.

CHAPTER XIV

A HARVEST FESTIVAL AND THE DISCOVERY THAT THE
DOCTOR PROBABLY REALLY MEANS SOMETHING

Frau Buchholz quickly set to work to make, if possible, sure of the hero. She proceeded in the usual German way by proposing that a party should be invited to come out for the Sunday.

I DISCUSSED this plan with Betti, and then I added in an off-hand way: "How would it be if we were to ask Herr Felix and his friends to come out and see us?" Betti answered: "I should say it would be a little wanting in tact to give them a direct invitation."—"But they promised to look in upon us again, that evening when they bade us good-bye."—"If they come of their own accord I should be delighted," said Betti, "but if you send them an invitation, I, for one, should go home."—"What should you wish to go home for? Your father and Emmi will be coming here, and Uncle Fritz too."—"Nevertheless I should go."—"Betti, do be reason-

able," said I. Betti was about to answer again, but before she could open her mouth I had left the room and slammed the door after me. If I hadn't done it at first, she would have ended in slamming it. I wanted her to judge for herself what an abominable practice it was.—There's nothing more effective in education than example!

In the afternoon I went into town and moreover alone, as Betti was out of humour, and on the journey all kinds of thoughts flitted through my mind: that his heart is in its right place has been proved, and that he is orderly and well-to-do I could see by his clothes and his linen. He is in the retail trade. My Carl began in a small way too. . . . Why should the two not build their own nest—a shop in front with a room at the back, and the living-rooms upstairs?

Yet how was I to get him out to Tegel?

I do not deny the existence of Providence, and so thought to myself: "If I happen to meet Herr Felix accidentally, then that meeting I shall look upon as a sign from Heaven." And as there is no reason why one should not assist the decrees of Providence, I resolved to go down the König Strasse and to see if I could, by chance, find him at his place of business. He was not there, however. Where should he be, however, but at our house in eager conversation with my Carl, and, moreover, about a parcel of

woollen socks which his principal wished him to purchase from my husband! "This is verily the voice of Heaven," said I to myself, and waited till they had settled their business and the young man was about to go. I told him I was glad to see him again, and added: "Next Sunday is harvest festival in Tegel."—"I intend to be there if the weather keeps fine and it does not rain," he replied, colouring up. "You can't be afraid of wet, I should think," said I cheerily as he bade us good-bye. "Well," thought I to myself, "if the weather on Sunday is fine, that'll be a third sign, and nothing will induce me to act contrary to the will of Providence."

Carl, who had been glad to hear from me how admirably the young man had behaved, now also called him considerate as well, for it was he who had persuaded his principal to do business with us, and Carl said that it promised to work well for the future. "Carl," said I, "you see how an act of kindness can yield interest. If I had not shown him the attention I did, who knows whether you would have got him to take the socks so readily; and Betti, moreover, seems to have taken a liking to him." Carl flew up at this, and exclaimed: "My daughter is worth more to me than a parcel of socks. Have you not had enough with your match-making yet, Wilhelmine?"—"Carl," I replied, with quiet dignity, "what is settled in Heaven will come to pass

on earth. The young man's business is, moreover, in your line. We have but the two daughters—how nice it would be if at some future day we could speak of 'Buchholz and Son, wholesale dealers in woollen wares and fancy articles'!" Carl considered for a little, and then replied: "If you will promise me to keep your hands out of the matter, I will not act contrary to your wishes."

"That I will promise you," said I, "but I have already given him a half-and-half sort of invitation for Sunday next."—"See how incorrigible you are, Wilhelmine; but this time I shall keep my eyes open, remember."

So I packed up such things as might be necessary for our guests on Sunday, and then went round to Uncle Fritz to tell him to come and bring a friend or two. I did this so that I might have some excuse to make to Betti for all the plates, knives, forks and spoons I brought back with me.

On Sunday the weather was magnificent!

My husband had come on the Saturday evening.

Fritz and Herr Kleines were to come the following afternoon, and Emmi was to bring the Police-lieutenant's daughter Mila out with her.

We waited for some time for Emmi, but in vain, and Uncle Fritz also did not turn up, so there was nothing to be done but go to the village without them. We did this, and saw the gaily decorated

harvest-waggon pass with the harvest-folk, carrying their tools. The procession was very pretty, but it did not give me much pleasure, for I was anxious about Emmi's not coming; and Uncle Fritz and his friends had also not come. At last there came Emmi, but alone. "Where is Mila?" I asked.—"She said she had no proper dress."—"What nonsense! And why are you so late?"—"I was watching the tramway being laid in the Französische Strasse."—"Emmi," said I, "and what took you to the Französische Strasse, and what have you got to do with tramways?"—"Oh, Mamma, it is so interesting!"—"You never used to think so."—"But when everything is so well explained, it is delightful!"—"And who has been explaining tramways to you? Out with what you have got to say."—"Doctor Wrenzchen," she said shyly.—"What's that you say?"—"The new line goes right past his house."—"How do you come to know that?"—"I met him in a tramcar the other day."—"Who?"—"Doctor Wrenzchen; it was quite accidental."—"And to-day again accidentally?" I asked.—"No, he fetched me."—"To see the tramway?"—"Yes; and then we drove to the Hallé gateway and back."—"Did he invite you to take the trip?"—"Yes, but I paid the fare myself; he never pays for me when we go by tramway."—"And so you make appointments, do you? Do you not remember how rude he was to me

lately?"—"Mamma, you quite misunderstood him; he is so good!"—"We shall have to return to this subject," said I; "but I cannot understand your allowing a man to make you advances, when he has already shown you the cold shoulder more than once; and to think of your meeting him in tramcars! I shall have to keep you out at Tegel with me."

And now I ask any one to make out what that Dr. Wrenzchen means. I give him the finest of roast veals, and he does not allow me to notice anything, yet scarcely have I turned my back when he goes philandering after the innocent child. Thank goodness, in the tramcars they are under supervision!

The gentlemen had gone on before; I and my daughters followed them to the Castle Restaurant, where the festival was in full swing; and there too we found Herr Felix and his friend Max. We exchanged greetings, engaged a table, and sat down comfortably.

We others enjoyed ourselves for some time afterwards. Betti bloomed like a rose, and Uncle Fritz danced away like a madman with the peasant girls. Herr Max, Felix's friend, was rather quiet; and when I asked him why he was so serious, he said that he was enjoying his friend's happiness. I did not make any reply, but inwardly I was sounding a trumpet to myself for sheer joy. The two friends must have had a talk together, and what it was

about I knew well enough without being told. I've learned so much long since.

Later, when we were returning to our modest little summer quarters, Carl said to me: "Wilhelmine, I think the firm Buchholz and Son would do very well. He is a splendid fellow—but do me the one favour, and do not drive at them."—"Carl," said I, "just as you think best. I have come to see that a good thing must bide its time. But I must tell you I wish Emmi to remain in Tegel with me. If the doctor means it seriously, he will know where to find her."

"What's the matter with the doctor, Wilhelmine?"

"You just wait and see; I shall be his mother-in-law yet, and then we can settle our accounts; he is pretty deeply in my books."

We were very merry till the gentlemen had to be off to town.—In the night I dreamt that Dr. Wrenchen and Emmi were off in a tramcar together, and that I ran after it without being able to catch them. It is to be hoped that this dream does not forebode evil.

CHAPTER XV

STRANGE THINGS GO ON BEHIND FRAU BUCHHOLZ'S
BACK AND THE DOCTOR IS CAUGHT AT LAST

WHEN children are small it is not difficult to get at their little secrets without their noticing it; one has, in fact, to be careful that they do not drop out, like the petals off a rose that has long been on its stalk. As children grow bigger, however, they learn to take better care of themselves, and manage to keep a secret, although their whole being betrays the possession of that which their little hearts cannot lock up firmly enough. But when they have become grown up and have learned to love something beyond their God and their parents, then they are as silent about their secrets as the mountain that concealed the enchanted prince. And if a mother wants to know that prince's christian and family name, she will have to wait for some stray chance, and follow its track like a private detective. We have all been young, and know quite well how it is!

My two daughters had provided themselves in good time with the materials necessary for their embroidery work for Christmas; and as nowadays not only are towels and dusters, but even wash-cloths adorned with modern old-German cross-stitch patterns, of course I had nothing to say against such work. It is the fashion, and is at any rate better than that time-squandering reading of novels, for, after all, what does it matter whether a certain couple one doesn't know, manage to make it up or whether they don't?

The girls were very busy, especially Emmi. If I, once in a way, forgot myself and said: "Well, Emmi, you seem to be preparing some very extraordinary surprise for us this Christmas!"—she was a little put out and replied: "Only don't expect too much, Mamma; you know the proverb: 'Let it be little, but from the heart.'"—But as I knew that she sat up half the night, I could not get my mind at rest, and, therefore, as is the duty of every mother, I took to playing the spy.—Yet, carefully as I watched, she was too cunning for me, and although I was, day by day, more firmly convinced that she was keeping some secret from me, apart from embroidered handkerchiefs and things, still I did not manage to obtain any clue. If I asked Betti about the matter, her answer was: "She doesn't tell me anything either of what she's about," and with Carl

I did not care to discuss the subject, for he had latterly been in such particularly good spirits that I did not wish to upset him with family quibblings. I now wish I had spoken to him, however, although all has turned out for the best. Still there would have been one angry body the fewer.

One evening Emmi and Betti were sitting in their room working at their Christmas presents, and I was giving audience to my own thoughts, when the door-bell rang. I was out like a shot, for I had firmly made up my mind not to leave the smallest trifle uncontrolled in the house—therefore I opened the door myself. “Am I right here for the Buchholzes?” asked a young man who looked like a tradesman’s apprentice.—“Yes, certainly, the Buchholzes live here.”—“Well, then,” he replied, “can I speak to Miss Emmi a minute?” All at once the scales seemed to drop from my eyes. “Here’s the key to the secret,” seemed to be called out within me, so without further ado, I replied: “That’s all right—I’m Miss Emmi myself.”—“You’ll have been lying a goodish time on the shelf then, but maybe the braces ’ull help you yet,” said the impudent wretch, and he brought out a parcel containing a pair of half-finished braces which he threw over his shoulders as if to show them off. “Master’s compliments, and he thinks surely never was a body long enough for these, unless he’s a born giant. Or maybe the gentle-

man means to use the braces as trouser-straps as well."

"They do seem too long, it's true," I replied as calmly as I could. "I'll go and measure them again. Call back in half an hour. Here are a couple of pence for you."—"You'll do better to keep them till I come back and get paid for the whole. Good-evening, mum!"

The insolent fellow then made off. I took a look at the braces. They were embroidered with the finest silk, a lot of rosebuds and forget-me-nots; a desperately troublesome bit of work, and at least half a yard too long.—For whom could Emmi have been plaguing herself so?—I was determined to find this out! So upstairs I went to my daughters' room, and knocked so that they might have time to hide their Christmas secrets. I entered then as if I knew nothing whatever. "Emmi," I said, "a youth has brought these braces with a message that they are far too long."—Emmi looked at me perfectly aghast and exclaimed: "Now it's all spoiled!"—"What is all spoiled?" I cried, terrified.—"And we had all so looked forward to it!"—"But, child——"

"You see, Mamma, what it comes to when you persist in mixing yourself up with everything!" said Betti to me reproachfully. "How so?"—"Well, there's no use now in keeping it a secret any longer. You'd never rest till you knew every detail. Emmi

is engaged to Dr. Wrenzchen; Papa has given his consent, and Dr. Wrenzchen's parents have also agreed to it, and we wanted to present the couple to you as a Christmas surprise. The braces are, of course, for the doctor, who always wears his trousers so fearfully short, and in trying to remedy the evil the braces have been made too long. There, now you know all; those stupid things" (here she pointed to the roses and forget-me-nots) "would in any case have soon put you on to the right track."

I had to sit down. Emmi engaged to the doctor! And behind my back! Without my knowing! My feelings must have been like those of a king who has been robbed of his authority. My authority in the family was undermined. And by whom? By a stranger. By that doctor, who had so often thwarted me, and had now deceitfully won Carl over to his side. This was too much for me. If I had dashed my head in full swing against the wall, I could not have felt more dazed than I did.

My first feeling was to burst out into a loud laugh, but I controlled myself as my child's happiness depended upon what I did now. Moreover, I could pluck the crow in question with the doctor till the bitter end at some future day. I therefore composed myself, rose, and went up to Emmi much moved, and embraced and kissed her. "You have my blessing, dear child," said I, "and if the doctor were

here . . . I would give him my blessing too.”—
 “Very well, Mamma,” cried Betti, smiling, and ran out of the room.

I was thus left alone with Emmi, and the girl poured her whole heart into her mother’s breast. With a kiss I silenced the little chatterer. And she seemed just made for kissing, as she stood there with beaming eyes, and her bright colour, so young, so happy and full of life, glowing in the first blush of love! I must say I grudged giving her to the doctor a little, but as they love each other, I am powerless.

Betti returned, and said that she had sent for Dr. Wrenzchen, so that he might get his share of my blessing, but the message sent back was that he would be engaged till nine o’clock with his professional duties, and that after nine he could not go out as his staircase was being painted.—“Why can’t he make use of the back stairs?” I asked. “He hasn’t got a second staircase in his house, Mamma, comfortable as it otherwise is,” was Emmi’s answer.—“So you’ve been to his house, it seems.”—“Yes, with Papa and the old Wrenzchens. Oh, they are such dear, delightful people!”

“Without me?” I exclaimed indignantly.

“Yes, Mamma. You always wanted so much to have him as a son-in-law, and so we meant to have presented him to you at Christmas,” said Emmi. “Whose was that low idea?” I asked. “It was Dr.

Wrenzchen's, of course. Oh Mamma, he is so clever and wise," cried Emmi; "and if you knew how loving he can be——"

"Emmi," I cried sorrowingly, "is your mother nothing to you now, and is this doctor who has broken into the fold—is he everything? Is this all the thanks I get for having borne you, and for bringing you up, for having guarded you like the apple of my eye—and are you all going to prove yourselves cold to me for the sake of that Dr. Wrenzchen? Perhaps it is just as well that the paint on his staircase prevents his coming till to-morrow; who knows but what, if I had him here——"

Emmi laid her arms gently on my shoulder. "Did Grandmamma scold in this way when you were engaged to Papa?" she asked and looked at me with the happiest of smiles. "No—no, child—and I'm not scolding. Only your not letting me take part in your happiness long since—it's that that vexes me."

"And we only meant to give you a treat such as you had never had before—it was out of pure love that we didn't say anything."

The child was right, and so I admitted myself satisfied. When the shop-boy returned I handed him the braces and gave him Carl's measurement. Carl is a head taller than the doctor, so that the length will be right enough if he straps them up high. My Carl did not come home from his district meeting till

later. And I did not show myself altogether amiable towards him of course, for he had to feel that a husband cannot ignore his wife without being the worse for it, Christmas surprises or not, which had come to an end as it was.

The next evening, when the doctor was at last to come and see me, Emmi was very restless, but brides always are when their divinity is about to appear. Uncle Fritz then came in. I knew what was going to be done, for the formal betrothal I had always put off, and had arranged with Uncle Fritz that the doctor should be smuggled into the house quietly on Christmas Eve. But, of course, thought I, if he is to be put among the Christmas gifts, that is my business, and I mean to attend to it. So I went unobserved into the room where the tree stood, and the presents were all laid out, and where Uncle Fritz had secretly let the doctor in. And there he stood like a very burglar! I shook hands with him, and he wished me a good-evening, but he hardly knew how to excuse himself for being found in the room. "Help me to light the tree," said I to him cheerily, and gave him a taper. He was so quick at it that I said jocosely: "You are a born *paterfamilias*." Then he took his seat in an armchair covered with flowers, in front of the table upon which the tree stood, and, as I gazed at him, he really

looked splendid—almost as presentable as a churchwarden!

Thereupon I opened the door and surprised them with the lighted tree and Dr. Wrenzen. They had not expected this, and Emmi cried out at once: "There he is!" and flew to him, and we others all rejoiced over the two young people who had plighted their troth, and over whom the Christmas-tree was shedding its light. But the girl's eyes sparkled with something brighter and more brilliant than the light of the candles. It was love. Carl went up to Dr. Wrenzen, held out his right hand to him, which the doctor took heartily, and said: "This is your first Christmas Eve in our family, which will henceforth be yours too, dear Dr. Wrenzen. May this kindly festival draw the bond between us closer still. Let us be one in joy and one in sorrow. We now belong to one another."

I was quite upset at hearing my Carl speak like this, but did not allow any one to notice it, and said: "Now, let us see what Father Christmas has brought."—Things of all kinds were discovered. The doctor was delighted with his well-piled-up table. I was, however, annoyed at one present which Uncle Fritz had put upon it without my knowledge—namely, an elegant *skat*-block with the motto—"Who stakes?" Fritz's present to me was a dramatic piece entitled "Receipt against Mothers-in-

law," which I at once laid aside. Emmi got from him a miniature tramcar, which did not vex her at all. The doctor too had exerted himself, and surprised Emmi with a splendid chain and locket containing his photograph; in fact, I had to take him to task a little for his extravagance; but he replied that the things would, of course, keep their value.

We toasted away, so to say, reverently. Uncle Fritz, however, did not cease with his joking, and several times looked at his watch, exclaiming: "Doctor, if you want to 'catch a salmon,' you'd better be off!" Dr. Wrenzchen, however, maintained that he couldn't get away, as his bride was holding him so firmly by the hand.—How nice it sounded to hear him call Emmi his bride!—It is, after all, the greatest reward a mother can have when all her cares, all her love, all her training and the many expenses are crowned by the wedding wreath. If Dr. Wrenzchen loves Emmi truly, with his whole heart, he is sure to give up card-playing, and even the most cautious betting.—I, for my part, shall not cease working towards his improvement.

A few days after their formal betrothal, the young people told me that they had made up their minds not to put off their wedding to any very distant day. "Why such hurry?" I asked. "Courting-time is such a happy time that it would be wrong to shorten it. Does it not give young people leisure for getting to

know each other properly? Does it not give the bridegroom the opportunity of proving himself attentive to his bride? And then there are many preparations to make that the new household may look as if things had come fresh from the warehouse." Dr. Wrenzchen, however, declared that he personally objected to any fuss, and that his practice did not leave him time for any superfluous love-making.

"Dear son-in-law," said I in reply, "to make oneself agreeable to a fellow-creature is never superfluous, especially when circumstances draw them into close relationship with each other. I, for my part, claim no further consideration, beyond that which can and ought to be demanded by any mother-in-law who has the welfare of her daughter at heart." To this the doctor replied, that he had great regard for me, and would gladly do as I wished in all reasonable things, but that in all other matters his will would have to be regarded as decisive. That it was his wish also to make Emmi happy, but not according to the prescriptions of other people, and not at the cost of his own personal freedom. I knew, of course, that by "other people," he meant only me, but I controlled myself and said: "Very well, then, let it be as you like, but I will not have the outfit got in too great a hurry. I'm the mother there."

Such hurry I detested, but then everything nowadays goes at galloping speed.

The doctor lives very comfortably, but the house is an old one, and he hasn't got a sufficient number of rooms. He needs a waiting-room and a consulting-room for professional purposes alone. Where then was the best room to be? This naturally led to disputes between us. He considered that when he was not using his consulting-room, his wife could make herself as comfortable as she liked, either in the consulting-room or in his study. That is a very pretty supposition, thought I, and maintained that it would be necessary for him to rent the upper floor as well. His reply was that he had absolutely no wish to work himself to death for the landlord. The upper floor was not likely to run away, and could be had at some future day.—“But what about the best sitting-room?” cried I in dismay.—“What,” he asked, “do we want with a room to show off a lot of furniture? Show-rooms that are used but once in a year on festive occasions are a stupid piece of luxury for the middle classes. The family pokes about in back rooms to make place for a furniture shop in front, that exists only to make work for scrubbing and cleaning. I'm not going to join in any such tomfoolery.”—“If you mean to turn the world upside down, I suppose we shall have to submit,” I replied sharply; but I did not urge him further, as the civil court had not yet uttered its final word. I quietly promised myself, however, to have my own way

when once the doctor had been firmly tied. There is so much uncertainty about engagements nowadays, that one cannot breathe freely till the civil court and the Church have done their part. I am for both, as things are made doubly secure.

Nor would the doctor listen to my proposal that he should move to another house. "My patients know where to find me," he said, "and, believe me, it is very difficult for a young medical man to get a practice in Berlin; there are close upon fifteen hundred doctors in the town."—"That's positively frightening," I exclaimed. "How can they all expect to exist? Is there enough ill-health for them all to make a living out of it? Berlin, truly, is enough to make one's hair stand on end." When I heard what competition there was, I no longer dreamt of persuading him to change his abode. One need thank God for allowing people to get ill; and if Heaven shows an interest in the doctors and provides for the sick folk, it would be downright wicked for others to make it difficult for patients to find the doctors.

Still, newly furnished the house would have to be, orderly though it is; for, however nice a bachelor may have had his abode, it's a very different thing when a wife comes into the house. "Dear doctor," said I one day, "the furnishing will be our business, simple but substantial; or do you like the modern

fashionable style of things better?" He replied that the stylish furniture seemed made more for being looked at than for use, but that he should like the dining-room after the present fashion, although otherwise he certainly preferred the comfort of the old style. And as regards bedsteads he liked genuine carpenter's work to all the new-fangled substitutes. "You may make your mind easy about them," I replied, "the beds shall be an abode in themselves. I shall have them made expressly, for, to my mind, ready-made things are not to be depended upon. I remember a brand-new bedstead breaking down with me once when we had a trip out to Biesenthal and we remained there overnight." He expressed his regret that this should ever have happened to me, and added that he anticipated the best possible arrangement in all the household matters from one so experienced as myself, more especially as regards the kitchen utensils, of which he had no knowledge whatever.

"But where shall the sideboard be placed?" said I, when we were looking over his rooms with a view to the new furnishing. "I think if we were to move that bookcase up to the loft we should obtain a suitable place."—"My books I cannot part with," he explained. I took out one of the old volumes just to show him how much space they ran away with, and in doing so opened the book. "Doctor," I cried

out, when sufficiently recovered from my horror, "what do you want books for with pictures of human beings with their skins stripped off? As far as I know no doctor ever strips the skin off people, and you have long since passed your examinations. Why need such hideous books be in the room where Emmi will be when you are out? Think what it would be if the child were accidentally to get this book into her hands. It might be the death of her. Those medical books must go up to the loft." He maintained that Emmi would soon get accustomed to the books. "Never!" said I. He was annoyed at this, and answered sharply: "I know better; the books I require, and they shall remain where they are!"—"As you like," said I, and took up my bonnet and shawl. "A pretty serpent I have taken to my bosom," thought I to myself. "But patience, my good doctor. No best room, and all those abominable books about, it would indeed be too delightful!"

And there at home sat Emmi, radiant with joy, sewing at her trousseau. "If only you knew what is awaiting you, you poor child," sighed I to myself. "But be not troubled; you have a mother who will protect her young like a lioness. As soon as the time comes, I know where the books will be put!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST PARTY BEFORE THE WEDDING, AND REFLECTIONS ON MOLOCH

WHEN I was a little girl we had of course been taught at school about Moloch; but in those innocent days, when I was only between six and seven years old, naturally I could not imagine the feelings of those mothers who had to place their little darlings as sacrifices into the red-hot arms of the coke-heated monster, great as were the efforts our master made to arouse our horror of the false gods. Now, however, as the day draws nearer upon which I—the passive mother of the bride—shall have to hand over my sweet Emmi to the doctor, I begin to understand about Moloch. A bridegroom does indeed always promise to cherish his intended, and to take her future into his hands; but what sort of hands are they?—Moloch's claws!

One day lately we had our last reading at the Police-lieutenant's house. These evenings have been

so enjoyable, and especially improving to the mind, for when we were all sitting round the large table reading a classic piece, each taking a part, we always felt the grandeur of our poets, more so even than when we had seen the pieces played on the stage; for it will be found that critics are unanimously agreed in thinking that actors are never sufficiently imbued with the spirit of classicism. Of course gentlemen had been quite excluded from these meetings; had they been admitted other interests would immediately have arisen, and the whole thing would probably have ended in an impromptu dance. Without gentlemen, on the other hand, one feels the influence of the author's genius, and culture flows in an undiluted stream into the youthful minds. We elderly ladies took the lovers' parts by way of precaution.

"You hear, Emmi," I said, "how kindly the Police-lieutenant's wife has acted towards you. Have you thanked her for having made that excellent pudding specially for you?"—Emmi was quite touched and replied that the Police-lieutenant's wife had always been extremely kind to her; that she did not at all know how she could ever make her any proper return.—"Keep us in loving remembrance," was her reply; "your new surroundings will be only too likely to separate you from your old friends."—How right she was!

Two of the young ladies now rose and fetched something from the next room, rolled up in tissue paper, and placed it on the table with much solemnity. The elder of the two—Amanda Kulecke, the girl that Uncle Fritz used to rave about—then made a short speech in which she said that games and dancing would soon come to an end for Emmi. But whatever shape the future might take, however much of joy or sorrow might be concealed in its horn of plenty, the realm of the ideal would now be revealed to her, a realm which Schiller had opened up to her and which had become so wholly her own at these evening readings. In remembrance of the hours that had been dedicated to these higher thoughts, her friends now wished to offer Emmi a small parting gift. With these words the tissue paper was removed, and there stood a pretty little bust of Schiller, with a touch of verdigris about his hair, standing on a black pedestal, on the one side of which was attached a thermometer; the gift therefore might stand on a writing-desk and be of practical use as well. Amanda wound up her little speech with the words: "*Es prüfe was sich ewig bindet*" (Prove ye each other well, who would be joined for aye), and then flew into Emmi's arms and kissed her. All the others too came and kissed her amid tears, and Emmi herself was quite overcome.

Scenes like this had been recurring constantly lat-

terly, not only at the reading-parties, but also at their Holbein Society, where the girls met to do embroidery in the Old German style, also at their Saturday Meetings for English Conversation, and the many other little undertakings the girls pursued for improving themselves in things of which we older people never dreamt in our young days.

It was but natural that we should want to have our revenge, for one doesn't dine or sup with other people without giving them something in return. So I said to Emmi: "Let all of your friends be invited to a splendid coffee-party, it will be the last one I shall give in your honour." She asked if Dr. Wrenzen might be asked also.—"That would be a pretty thing," I exclaimed, "one gentleman cannot surely be asked to join a ladies' coffee-party!"—She said that if the doctor couldn't be asked, she didn't care a bit to have a party. She said it would have been so nice to show him to her friends, and it could quite well be done, if the brothers and their friends were allowed to come and fetch their sisters home.—"But supposing some have no brothers, like Amanda Kullecke?" said I.—"Then we will get Uncle Fritz to bring Herr Kleines, and he can accompany Amanda home, as far as the Bülow Strasse."

In my time it was the custom for the bride's friends to come shortly before the wedding-day and to help in sewing the wedding-dress. Every one put

in a few stitches at the hem, or wherever else anything remained to be done. This they did to show their affection, and I think the old custom a very nice one, for there clings to the dress, afterwards, the thought that friends helped to make it, and it is also the last loving service rendered by the companions of the circle she is about to leave; yet the good old custom does certainly most painfully remind one of the preparation for the sacrifice.

When I expressed these views of mine to Carl, he found fault with me and said, I rummaged too much about in my feelings; that my duty was to see that the little festival went off cheerfully.—But a father is never a mother, and what can he know of Moloch?

I must admit that on the afternoon when all the young girls had assembled, the sight was an exceedingly pretty one. Chairs had been placed in a semi-circle in the middle of the room, facing the window, and there sat all those who were at the moment engaged with the wedding-dress, which in its snowy whiteness lay in their midst like a soft cloud. The other girls were sitting about just as they pleased and busy with some kind of handiwork, and were chatting away merrily to their hearts' content. I went about among them with the coffee-pot and cake-plate. How pleasant a sight it is to see such blooming young creatures in loving companionship with one another! One feels as if one were walking in

a shady wood in spring-time, with the sun shining upon the tender young leaves, and little birds twittering and singing in and out among the branches. I forgot altogether that I had reached a sedater age, and found myself joining in the girls' fun, and joking and laughing as if I had been one of them myself. And how affectionate they were to Emmi! One of them always had her arm round her waist, sometimes even two at a time were doing this, and kept kissing and looking up at her as though they had been her sisters. "Just like turtle-doves," said I to myself; "and down into this charming dovecot swoop the hawks and disturb its peace!"

The doctor had, it is true, sent a beautiful almond cake for "those who worked at the bride's dress;" but my eyes are not to be blinded by cakes; I see beyond, and know well enough that he is an egoist, otherwise he would not oppose me in so many things that I consider indispensable for my child's welfare. He won't even take a wedding-trip, because, as he says, his patients cannot be left. Rubbish!

When the dress was finished it had, of course, to be tried on. Nay, but how bewitching Emmi did look as she came into the room, conscious of looking well, and beaming with joyful excitement; it surpassed all conception, and could only be painted! None of the girls ventured to go very near her, but gazed at her in silent admiration from a distance.

Betti alone clasped her in her arms and bent her head mournfully upon her sister's cheek.

Could she be thinking of Emil Bergfeldt? I hardly liked to ask myself the question; but if any of that family had come within my reach at the moment, something would assuredly have happened.

Betti has strength of character, and raising her head, said to the other young girls: "Does not my darling sister look sweet?" The others then began to praise the dress and to declare it angelic. However, it was not the dress that made the angelic impression, it was Emmi's own self. She was as beautiful as all the rest put together, and even a little lovelier still!

Just as twilight was setting in, the doctor came. Emmi, who had long since taken off her wedding-dress, looked radiantly happy as they walked arm-in-arm from one group of her friends to another, and I must say the doctor stood the ordeal of being subjected to the critical gaze of a number of girls very well; still it was easy to see that they had nothing to find fault with in him. Amanda Kulecke, however, said aloud, that a doctor would not be her choice, for when patients sent for him he would have to be off, and it was half stuff and nonsense.

My answer to this remark of hers was that to help suffering people was a very noble profession, and

in any case better than poisoning people. That was one for her—for the Kuleckes are distillers.

Later in the evening Uncle Fritz, Herr Kleines and a number of young men came, related to the girls either as brothers or cousins. Games were played till supper was ready, and the doctor had to pay most forfeits as he was always engrossed with Emmi and not paying attention to the game. How delighted we all were when he was called upon to do extraordinary things to redeem his forfeits, and how hot he got when he had “to fall into the well,” and to be on his knees till Emmi released him! It was too funny. Herr Kleines, who was for ever proposing something with kissing, was, at last, not asked again. He really seems, sometimes, not to know where he is—amusing as he can be at other times.

After supper the dancing began. Uncle Fritz had sent us crackers with costumes in tissue paper, and contrived that Dr. Wrenzchen got a hat the shape of a huge slipper,* at which even Carl was greatly amused. The doctor enjoyed the joke himself, but said it was only external. I fear, however, he will not give in to her much; and, when he has made the girl unhappy, will again merely declare that it’s—only external!

When all had gone, and my daughters had re-

* *Den Mann unter dem Pantoffel haben* (To have a husband under one’s slipper) is the German proverbial expression for a wife having the upper-hand.

tired to bed, Carl, Uncle Fritz and I remained up a little while. Carl declared he liked the doctor better every day, and that he had been specially pleased to see him to-day joining so merrily in the innocent mirth of the party of young girls. "He and innocent mirth!" I exclaimed.—"I can't comprehend your aversion to the doctor, Wilhelmine," said Uncle Fritz; "you used in every possible way to try and catch him."—"Because I didn't know what he was," I replied. "Wait till the Moloch is heated and then see!"—"I don't understand you, Wilhelmine—you are quite foolish," said my Carl. "I foolish! Not I. But neither of you care a bit whether I am made a sacrifice as well as Emmi. Not till I'm buried in my grave will you discover what I have been to you. You will see then that that Dr. Wrenzchen will rub his eyes externally with onions and internally rejoice that I'm gone. But good-night. You'll both see soon enough what will be the end of it all."

CHAPTER XVII

THE WEDDING OF THE DOCTOR AND EMMI, AND THE TRAGEDY OF A PERFUME

WHY did you not come to the wedding of my youngest daughter with Dr. Wrenzchen? It is a pity you were not there, for I am convinced you would have been pleased, although, for my own part, I hadn't much pleasure out of it, for a bride's mother, in fact, can never be pleased. She may smile and look uncommonly happy in her new Bordeaux silk with real lace, she may even declare that she is quite content; but inwardly she has her thorns and thistles.

And what a trouble it is before one gets all ready! First there's the re-furnishing of the house for the young couple. There would be absolutely no difficulty about such a thing, if only the doctor would be agreeable, and allow a careful mother-in-law her way, when he knows she is sure to act for his good. But when he proves obstinate, and is for ever put-

ting in his word, and objecting to the most necessary articles, simply because he fancies that a dining-table for twenty-four persons is a luxury, and that there is no space for a lady's writing-desk—then, naturally, there is vexation about every article. I do admit that Dr. Wrenzchen's rooms are now a little closely packed with the new furniture, but then he ought to think of the rooms he will have to have later; but this—just to spite me—he won't do. And no best room! I never heard of such a thing!

The largest room he insists upon having made the bed-room, for hygienic reasons. That is again a new-fangled piece of nonsense! We have all grown up without hygiene.

I had to give in to him, of course, but still could not refrain from saying: "Dear doctor, I can only wish that you may be happy with your new-fashioned notions. As regards my daughter, she knows that her parents' old-fashioned house will always be open to her, even after eleven o'clock at night."

He muttered something at this that I couldn't understand. It's a blessing, I believe, that he did no more than mutter, for patience is a barrel with but a very thin bottom. I had also hoped that he might still decide to take a wedding-trip; but, when I gave him to understand that even cooks, when they got married, went at least as far as Bernau or Biesenthal, he would promise nothing, and maintained that his

practice would not allow of his making any trip, for he had one patient seriously ill whom he could not leave, and whom it was a matter of pride with him to bring round. To this also I had to give in, but did so somewhat snappishly.

Then there were the invitations to the wedding to send out. Who was to be asked and who was not? He has his own circle of friends, and we ours. If my Carl had not made the sensible remark, "Let us rather send out a few invitations too many, than give people offence," I believe we should still be deliberating about one person and another; so his eleven medical friends were allowed to pass. One needs dancing men, to be sure.

The wedding morning came at last; to many, very many, it was an ordinary work day, to me a day of anguish, and to my child a day of joy. Emmi was all happiness. When she came to bid me good-morning, and threw her arms round me, and kissed me, her eyes beaming with a blissful look of faith—as if the future were to be one long day of brightness and light, and the way along which she was to wander with Dr. Wrenzen a smooth, soft pathway, from which busy little angels had swept away every discomfort—then even I too, for a moment, thought it could not be otherwise than well for her. But such thoughts are mere hopes—powdered sugar to the rhubarb of human life.

At one o'clock Dr. Wrenzchen came with his friend Dr. Paber, who was to be one of the witnesses, and fetched Emmi to go to the Registrar's office. My Carl and Uncle Fritz were to act as witnesses also, and accompanied the others. I did not go, as I had important matters to attend to.

Was the child to enter her new life without any poetic accompaniment whatever? No! there must be some compensation to her for the wedding-trip which had to be given up; and this I meant to accomplish by secretly decorating Dr. Wrenzchen's house with flowers. The happy thought had originated with Augusta Weigelt, and the good creature helped me in decorating the house, while Emmi was being legally conveyed to the doctor by the heartless officials of the State. Round the banisters and doorways we wound wreaths of green. The sitting-room we turned into a regular flower-garden, and their bedroom became a perfect palm-house. It all looked wonderfully beautiful, and Augusta declared she had never seen anything so exquisite in all her life. The counterpanes looked as fresh and bright as newly-fallen snow, and literally shone through the green plants that we had raised in the form of a pyramid in front of the beds.—“When the lamp is lit the effect will be like something out of the ‘Arabian Nights’!” said I.

"Just like fairy-land," Augusta declared, "if only the pots hadn't the musty smell of a hot-house."

"I tell you what, Augusta," I cried, "run quickly round to the perfume shop, and fetch me a bottle of essence of orange-blossom, we will sprinkle the plants with it, and when the two enter the room they will fancy themselves in Nice. I remember well, in Italy, how enchanting the scent of the orange-blossoms was."

The idea pleased Augusta immensely; I gave her money, and off she ran.

While she was away I looked carefully round to see that nothing was wanting about the house. It was a perfect doll's house, everything looked so exceedingly trim and neat. There was even a brand-new boot-jack; I had asked Uncle Fritz to get it.

Augusta had hurried, and we now quickly sprinkled the essence about, and then left. For there was to be a simple luncheon at our house, as the ceremony was not to take place till four o'clock, and the marriage feast was to be held in the *Englisches Haus* at five.

The luncheon went off very pleasantly. Dr. Paber proposed the welcome toast of health and happiness to the young couple, in which we all heartily joined, and then conversed till it was time to dress.

Meanwhile all sorts of wedding presents had been coming in: a number of useful things, and also many

that were useless; for instance, two champagne-coolers, as Dr. Wrenzchen rather objects to buying his champagne; the eleven doctors gave two very handsome silver candlesticks; Herr Kleines' present was a glass globe with gold fish, which, I know, Emmi cannot bear. Uncle Fritz advised her to cook the fish green, and to use the bowl for bottling plums. The Police-lieutenant's wife sent a magnificent bridal bouquet of myrtle and orange-blossoms, just as the couple were starting off in the bride's carriage.

How charming the two looked in the elegant equipage! Emmi, in her white dress and gauzy veil, and the green wreath in her golden fair hair, looked as lovely as only a bride can look on her wedding-day; and the doctor so spruce and neat, brand-new from top to toe, looked as solemn as a newly-bound hymn-book. There was really nothing to find fault with in him, everything sat well upon him.

Then the bridesmaids and their bouquets, and the many other ladies in elegant toilettes, and the gentlemen all in ball-costume—it was a silent splendour! I had never imagined that the scene would be as gorgeous. All the Landsbergerstrasse had their heads out of the windows when we drove off to church.

When the two were standing at the altar I felt greatly affected. For a mother, after all, thinks of the future. Would Dr. Wrenzchen always be as

good to Emmi as my Carl had been to me? And what if they did not agree, and happiness forsook them? What then? What then?

When their rings were being exchanged and the clergyman joined their hands, the sun streamed in sideways through the window and threw its golden light upon the two young people. The organ rolled forth its rich tones through the large body of the church, as if rejoicing in their happiness and joy. I too felt in some measure comforted, and thought: "The good God will watch over them; and in other things, Wilhelmine, you will yourself see that all's as it should be."

The congratulating then began; and what a lot of kissing and shaking of hands there was, amid sunshine and music from the organ!

When we were about to drive back, Emmi came up to me and whispered: "Mamma, please take my bouquet and let me have yours."—"Why, Emmi?"—"Mine is almost all orange-blossoms."—"Yes; but . . ."—"Don't you remember that Franz cannot bear the smell; it gives him headache?"

I stood there like one petrified, long after they had driven off. "Good heavens," thought I, "and we have sprinkled all those plants with essence of orange-blossoms!"—"Augusta," I cried, "Augusta, we must go and air the room!"

How I got to the *Englishes Haus*, where the wed-

ding feast was to be, I don't remember. I was for ever, in imagination, throwing open the windows in Dr. Wrenzchen's house; my mind refused to soar beyond this. At last we were all seated round the table eating and drinking. Every one seemed to enjoy what was set before them, and as the day was pretty warm the repast was washed down freely and merrily, as became the festive occasion. I was the only one who could not join in the general merriment, and took but little of the many dishes that went round, and did this only to see what the people had provided for us. To eat much was out of the question.

I had an excellent place. Old Herr Wrenzchen took me in to dinner, and my Carl took Franz's mother. She is a gentle kindly soul, and thinks no end of him. She told me many things about his boyhood—how he had worked his way quickly through the Gymnasium, and had always brought home the best testimonials, and that later at the University he had been steady and industrious, yet was of a cheerful and frank disposition. All this I was most glad to hear, but could not help thinking to myself, Of what use in married life are the best testimonials from school, and the most praiseworthy steadiness at the University? Things are often very different later.

Emmi and the doctor looked charming side by side

behind the large bouquets which had been placed on the table in their honour; but whenever I looked at the flowers they seemed to strike me to the heart, for they reminded me of the essence of orange-blossom I had sprinkled about the bedroom. Augusta—the good soul!—assured me, it is true, that all the windows had been opened as wide as possible, and that the smell had almost vanished already, still I could not rid myself of an inward feeling of uneasiness. It had, indeed, occurred to me to get the gardener to remove all the green, but that couldn't be.—What would the neighbours have thought of such doings? The plants had been hired for a week, and I had settled the amount in advance.

The table really looked perfectly delightful. First of all, there were the eleven doctors whose superior culture might be recognised even at a distance; between them, alternately, was a young, or at least, a youngish lady; then there was also the Police-lieutenant in his Sunday uniform, in which he looked very fine; and we others. Herr Weigelt had on a coat of wondrous shape, it is true, and Augusta had made his white necktie a little too blue—for she washes the small things in a hand-basin—but he was so utterly happy and smiled away so pleasantly to himself, that his outward appearance did not seem to matter. And he hadn't, of course, as much money to spend on it as some people. Uncle Fritz, on

the other hand, was spruce from top to toe; his tail-coat of the latest fashion, and patent leather boots on for the first time.

There was another engagement I would gladly have heard announced, but there was no chance of it. I had sent Herr Felix an express invitation in a very long letter, but he declined nevertheless. I could not account for this. When I told Betti of Herr Felix having declined my invitation she did not, indeed, say anything, but I noticed her change colour, and become pale, deadly pale, which quite frightened me. Still she recovered herself almost directly, and attempted to smile. But she went off to her own room and busied herself among her possessions, and then returned looking as usual.—What can be the matter with him?

A number of very good speeches were made, both serious and merry, and others that were nothing at all, because the speakers always wandered from the point they were aiming at. Dr. Paber, who spoke in the name of his colleagues, ended his speech by saying that they all hoped Dr. Wrenzchen would not forget his old friends in his newly-found happiness, and referred specially to their pleasant scientific evening-meetings.—Dr. Wrenzchen replied and promised always greatly to value the friendships he had made at school and the University; and added that he felt sure his wife would be glad to see him

furthering the interests of science in the company of his colleagues.—And this he coolly proclaimed before all the assembled guests.—I know what that science is.—*Skat*,—that's its name! But this comes of school and University doings. Will his good testimonials make Emmi happy when he goes off to a restaurant, and she is left alone at home?—Never!

I was glad when the dinner was over. While the table was being cleared, we had coffee in the adjoining room, and then the dancing commenced.

The ball was opened by Emmi and Dr. Wrenzen, then came the eleven doctors, with the bridesmaids and other young ladies. Uncle Fritz had arranged this because, as he said, he wanted to see a dozen doctors dancing one after the other. Truly it was a sight rarely to be seen!

We elderly folk, of course, took part in the dancing also. My Carl and I danced a solemn valse in remembrance of our own wedding-day,—“Carl,” said I, “we have both become a little weightier than we were then.”—“Yet as happy as ever,” he replied. I was silent. Could I tell him of all my sorrow? No, it would have been cruel. “Woman,” thought I, “is born to suffer and to endure.”

It must be admitted that the eleven doctors added greatly to the success of the evening. The later it got, the more they threw off the serious demeanour of the profession, and entered into the fun as if they

had been a set of merry students. How well, too, they understood how to amuse the ladies! But a learned man always understands more about the weather and the theatre. And they were all such good dancers too; I had to have a duty-dance with every one of them.

When the night was pretty well advanced, the doctor wanted to be off.—“Emmi is enjoying herself so,” said I, and begged him to remain, at least till the cotillon was finished. Every moment was precious to me on account of the airing of the room; and he gave way.

Then, however, came Herr Weigelt’s mishap. He cannot stand anything, it is true, but why need he always be asking the prettiest young girls to dance with him? And so it happened that he fell rather awkwardly with the Police-lieutenant’s daughter Mila, and was rebuked by her father. He did not take the reprimand quietly, but made all sorts of remarks, and then danced off again. Later, when he showed himself rather too affectionate, Uncle Fritz took him by the arm and led him away to the gentlemen’s room, where there was good red wine, punch and a special brew. What they did with the unfortunate creature I don’t know, but certainly he was in a pitiable state when Augusta, in her anxiety, fetched me to him. He had collapsed altogether, and was calling himself an unnatural father to have left

his child at home to join in such revelry. He declared they had better bury him at once, and asked Augusta if she could forgive him. Thank God, there were eleven doctors at hand! The one prescribed ice, the other black coffee, the third a glass of beer, the fourth sal-volatile, and the fifth something else. But Herr Weigelt would not let any one of them go near him. In her despair, Augusta went and dragged in my son-in-law, and Weigelt seemed to be willing to trust him. When Dr. Wrenzchen wanted to be off again, Weigelt whimpered and implored him to stay, and caught tight hold of him. It had become high time for the young couple to leave, for several of the guests had already taken their departure. What was to be done?

Yet what is my son-in-law a doctor for, and what are the eleven other doctors for?—"Has any one of my colleagues a morphia-syringe by him?" asked Dr. Wrenzchen. Luckily half-a-dozen were at hand. Thereupon Herr Weigelt was operated upon, and ten minutes afterwards he was so totally unconscious that he could be transported home, by cab, like a helpless parcel, accompanied by two doctors. It must be a horrible sight to have any one brought home in such a condition.

When the young couple left, morning was already beginning to dawn, for they were almost the last to leave. Carl declared, that night, as he was settling

to sleep, that the wedding had been a very jolly one.—Jolly, indeed! Perhaps for some people, but not for me. I saw the sun rise before falling into a kind of doze, which, however, did not last long, for anxiety woke me up again pretty speedily.

At about nine o'clock, next morning, I started off to Emmi. It was impossible for me to stay at home any longer, for I had the feeling that something dreadful had happened. And so there had. My presentiments have never deceived me yet!

I rang the bell, and when the servant-girl opened the door I saw at once that something was wrong; for when I asked her whether I could see her master and mistress, she replied in a long-drawn—"Oh, yes. Frau Doctorin is upstairs." Alone, thought I, as I went up. How horrified I was when I saw the child. My goodness! There she sat on the sofa, still in her ball-dress, crying; it was enough to break one's heart to look at her. "My child!—Emmi!" I cried—"whatever is the matter?"—"Oh, Mamma, I am the most miserable creature in the world!"—"What! Has he been striking you?"—"Who?"—"Who, but your husband, the hypocrite!"—"Mamma, not a word against Franz; he is goodness itself. Anything you say to offend him is to offend me." She said this in a very determined way, and ceased crying. "But, child, tell me what's the matter!"—"It's all your fault, and yours only," she exclaimed.

“What next, I wonder! My fault! Mine! What have I done? Is this all the thanks I get for decorating your house so poetically?”—“I know you did not mean any harm,” said Emmi reproachfully, “but why did you pour orange-blossom scent over everything?”—“Come, tell me all about it—what did he say?”—“When we came in last night he was delighted with the flowers on the staircase, and took me by the hand and led me into the sitting-room. ‘This is to be our home, my dear little wife. Happiness has stepped over the threshold with us, and we shall manage that it remains with us always.’ He drew me towards him and kissed me. Suddenly, however, he asked: ‘Where can that odious smell of orange-blossom come from?’ We looked about, but could not find out whence it came. At last he discovered that the smell came from the palms in the bedroom.”—“Was he angry?”—“He merely said that you had, no doubt, meant it kindly, but that the plants must be moved.”—“So you called the servant?”—“Of course not; we didn’t want her. She would only have made us feel uncomfortable. I helped him, and we dragged the pots out into the corridor. It was very funny, and we had our laugh over it. When we had got them all out, he said it was very nice to have a wife who wasn’t afraid to work for. . . .”—“Well, and what then?”—“There was a ring at the door-bell, and he had to go off to

a patient who was seriously ill.”—“Well, I hadn’t anything to do with that.”—“He called out as he went away: ‘I shall be back as soon as possible.’ And I called out to him: ‘I will wait up for you.’ And I waited and waited, but he did not come; I walked up and down, but he did not come; I looked out of his study window for him, but he did not come; I sat down, but still he did not come. I began to cry, but checked myself by thinking of the beautiful words the clergyman had said about a doctor’s profession. I determined to be a true doctor’s wife, but it was difficult beyond all measure. In order to take my thoughts away from myself I took up a book and turned over the pages.”—“One of his books?”—“Yes, that large one there; and I opened it at a picture of a mutilated human body, and screamed aloud in my horror.”—“I had told him that he ought to have those abominable books carried up to the loft!”—“I began to feel terrified at being alone with those books. Oh, you cannot think what I felt like!”—“You poor child! This is really dreadful!”—“At half-past six he sent for his instruments, with a message for me that he would have to perform an operation when the time came. And he has never yet come back.” And with this she again burst into tears.

After some time I succeeded in consoling her. I helped her to take off her dress and persuaded her

to lie down a little, and as youth cannot do without sleep, she was soon slumbering.

When she was fast asleep I slipped out of the room, and then examined the bell-pull of the night-bell. It was an ordinary piece of wire. "There is no use waiting till the doctor comes in," thought I; "there would only be a scene again about his not having agreed to a wedding-trip, and about his abominable books." So I took my departure.

Before I left, however, I fetched a pair of scissors from Emmi's work-table, and snipped the wire of the night-bell right through, just below the front door.

"Now, let them ring!" said I to myself.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WRENZCHENS' FIRST PARTY AND THE DISASTROUS INSUFFICIENCY OF CRAWFISH

I AM not in the least boastful, but I may say that Emmi has had an education that she needn't be ashamed of. At school she got an insight into the realm of the ideal through the classic writers, and learned botany and drawing also; lessons in fine needlework she had from the widow of an Imperial Councillor, and at home she was taught practical things. And I fancy the *rissoles* I taught her to make the doctor will not need to call improper food. My Carl always likes them, and they have to be mixed with bread.

Party-giving, however, requires some experience, and so I considered it my duty to stand by my child with help and advice, for, although the doctor is indifferent to what other people think, I am not going to have it said afterwards that the party wanted style.

First of all, it had to be considered who were to be invited. We reckoned that there were twenty-two persons whom it would be absolutely necessary to ask, yet that couldn't be done, for there were only twelve chairs, so the doctor determined to divide them into two sets, and to have a party first for the younger lot and then one for the older people. In other words, no doubt, he meant to say: "Worthy mother-in-law, we don't mean to cook for you on this first occasion." I replied, with the last remnant of a smile I had at my command: "Just as you think best; and there need not be so much fuss made when the younger ones are invited." He answered that he had no idea whatever of cutting things short, that there must be a respectable turnout such as the middle classes of Berlin were accustomed to, but that there was no need to do more than that. "What then do you think of having, for instance?"—"Crawfish," said he; "they are still in first-rate condition and very cheap; most people fancy they are over in August, but Micha will let me have the best he has, for we are good acquaintances." "Very well, then, cheap crawfish; and what then?" I asked.—"A goose," suggested Emmi.—"A goose is too expensive, and doesn't cut up well," said the doctor; "roast veal will be better, especially if there is plenty of sauce and potatoes." "A lot of potatoes is very ungenteel," I ventured to remark.—

“Those who don’t consider them good enough eating can leave them,” replied the doctor. “And what about pudding?” I asked.—“Any sort of milky ground rice-pudding—it goes furthest,” the doctor answered decisively. “Why not rather bluish Plötzensee gruel?” * I exclaimed, by way of a little joke, in rejecting his proposal.—“That’s a matter of taste,” he replied. But one is never understood in that house.

When I got home my husband asked me what the result of the preparatory meeting had been. “Carl,” said I, “it will be positively ridiculous, but I mean to frustrate that notion of his about the milk-sop. My daughter shall not be exposed to ridicule.”

Emmi, the dear unsuspecting creature, was perfectly delighted at the thought of giving her first party, and was therefore willing to agree to anything he wished, for when I said to her that she must at all events order some kind of tart, she replied that she had already made some pastry by way of trial, and that her husband had thought it excellent, especially as the whole dishful only cost eight-pence. “Does that include the eggs?” I asked. Her reply was that pastry could be made quite well without eggs. There is no possibility of altering matters there.

Full of anxiety, therefore, I awaited the day of

* Plötzensee is a prison—hence Frau Buchholz ironically suggests prison fare.

the party. My Carl and I, and Betti, were invited: the doctor had shown proper feeling enough not to pass over his wife's relatives. Then there were the Weigelts, Dr. Paber, Herr Lehmann and his wife, Herr Kleines and Fräulein Kulecke. The twelve chairs were all occupied.

"Why in all the world did you ask the Weigelts?" I asked Emmi, when I was helping her to lay the cloth in the afternoon. "He is somewhat of a bore, it is true," she replied; "but Franz thinks he plays *skat* very well." "*Skat!*" I exclaimed, horrified. "Well, yes," said Emmi, "there are just exactly the right number for two sets."—"And what are we ladies to do while the gentlemen have neither eyes nor ears for anything but their detestable game?"—"He asked Amanda Kulecke, that she might recite something to us—she has a wonderful voice."—"Just like a sergeant's," said I bitterly.

At eight o'clock the first guests arrived; of course we Buchholzes had come a little earlier, in order to do the honours if necessary. It cannot be denied that the rooms looked splendid.

Everything was new and as it ought to be. There was green in front of the windows, a basket of flowers on the table before the sofa; the lamps were bright and cheerful, and Emmi, looking charming, although a little timid, awaiting her guests.

The Weigelts, in a somewhat ungenteel fashion,

came in just as the clock struck the hour. Emmi embraced Augusta very heartily, and Herr Weigelt said a few words about their having considered themselves highly honoured in receiving an invitation. Of course he again had on a necktie such as not a creature ever wears nowadays. Then came Fräulein Kulecke, who, in her deep voice, remarked that the rooms looked exceedingly poetic; she was followed by Dr. Paber, who always has a few friendly words for me, and said that he found me looking wonderfully younger and brighter than when he last saw me.

Herr Lehmann, a lawyer, and one of Dr. Wrenzen's most intimate friends, had squeezed himself into a dress-coat, while the other gentlemen wore frock-coats; this induced the doctor to make some jokes at his expense, which seemed to make Herr Lehmann feel more uncomfortable than he had been on first coming in. His wife did not speak much either.

Herr Kleines came last, and had on a pair of ruddy-brown gloves, and thus looked for all the world as if he had just come from a slaughter-house. Heaven only knows what sort of people he means to astonish by such outward arrangements!

"Now," said I to Emmi, "we'd better put on the craw-fish; the young people have all come. You stay here with your guests."

"Are these all the craw-fish you have?" said I to the girl in the kitchen.—"Yes, ma'am."—"There's not enough to go round," said I.—"There's roast meat and pudding also."—"Where's the pudding?"—"In the larder."—I took a light and went in to look.—Yes, there stood the three dishes with the milk-sop. I tasted it, and found neither substance nor flavour about it, one might as well have hung one's tongue out of the window.—"Well," thought I, "it's the doctor's will, of course."

As I stood there shaking my head at those three wretched bowls, I heard a scraping, shuffling noise near me. "What's this?" thought I, and looked about. The noise came from a basket below the table. What should I find on taking off the lid, but—craw-fish! And such ones, regular monsters!

"There are more craw-fish," I cried indignantly on returning to the kitchen, "and you tell me those are all you've got!"—"Those mayn't be touched, ma'am; the doctor picked them out himself for to-morrow. He's going to have them for breakfast." "The guests have got to be considered first," I replied, and was about to throw the craw-fish I had discovered into the pan, when the impertinent girl planted herself right in front of the fire, and cried: "I'll not let anybody to the fire, even though it were the devil's own mother-in-law!"—"We'll see about that," said I, and went to fetch Emmi.—I

could see well enough that it was the doctor, speaking out of that girl; but such a creature should be taught better, Emmi should stand by her mother. Emmi came at once when I called her.—“Child,” said I, when we were in the passage, “your cook has insulted me beyond conception; either she begs my pardon on her knees, or I leave your house on the spot.”—“Mamma, what has happened?”—I explained what had occurred.—“Mamma, surely you must have provoked her.”—“Do you mean to take that wretched girl’s part?”—“She has never yet given us cause to find fault with her.”—“You must at once give her notice to leave.”—“Mamma, that’s impossible, she is so reliable and we are quite satisfied with her.”—“So you mean to sacrifice your own mother for that disreputable creature? Very well!”

At this moment the doctor appeared; he had wondered why the craw-fish had been so long in being got ready, and they were not in the pan yet.—“Doctor,” said I with dignity, “you will surely not have me insulted in your house?”—“I?—not likely,” he replied; “come away into the sitting-room, not a soul shall harm you!”—Did he think such a phrase was sufficient to heal the wounds which that wretch of a cook had given me? I considered it my duty to tell him all that had happened—how I had heard the craw-fish shuffling about in the basket, and how the impudent girl had told me a bare-faced untruth;

how I had been bound to show my indignation; how she had prevented me approaching the fire, and what insulting remarks she had thrown at me. And he, what did he say to it all?—"That's only external, dear mother-in-law. Don't be too sensitive, but come away in."—"No," I cried; "either that girl goes, or I go!"—Emmi stood there bewildered and not knowing what to do, and the doctor did his best to console her; and away in the kitchen was that fury of a cook making such a clatter with the coal-shovel and the dishes, one might have fancied some savage creature had got in among them.—"Just listen to the noise she is making," I cried, "and you keep her in your house? That is pretty discipline!"

Carl now came to see what was detaining us. "It is already nine o'clock," he exclaimed, "and we are all hungry!"—I told him what had happened, what the cook had said to me, what Emmi had said, what the doctor had said, and what I had said, and wound up by saying: "Here I do not intend to remain."—Carl deliberated a moment, and then said quietly: "Wilhelmine, do not spoil the young couple's first party. Do not interfere with their affairs. You know well enough that in the early days of our marriage, things did not go as smoothly as they did later on. We are among friends here who think less about finding all the arrangements perfect, than that they get a hearty welcome."—"And that the largest crow-

fish are kept for the next day's breakfast!" I cried. —"Wilhelmine, remember that we are guests here! I beseech you to behave in a friendly way."—He took my arm in his and led me back into the room where the guests were assembled.—Emmi went off to the kitchen.

The doctor took in Frau Lehmann; Herr Lehmann, Frau Weigelt; Herr Kleines my Betti; Carl Emmi; Herr Weigelt Amanda Kulecke; and Dr. Paber me.

The few craw-fish were soon finished. Emmi ate one; I did not take any, so that there might be more for the guests. Dr. Wrenzchen, however, did not stint himself, and declared them to be of excellent flavour.

"They are probably the very last of the season, Franz," said Dr. Paber, when I pressed him to help himself to another from the dish, which had come round again as good as empty. "They may be, Paber," replied the doctor; "they are, of course, not as plentiful now as in summer. One good thing is, that one is not likely to overload oneself, and can enjoy what follows."

"It is certainly better not to take too many," returned Dr. Paber.—"Oh," said I, "some people eat a quantity for breakfast." Dr. Paber and Emmi's husband both doubted the accuracy of my remark. But I knew what I knew. The hypocrite!

Then came the roast veal. Emmi might have told him that none of her family cared for veal, although it may be an elixir to his stomach.—The roast was better than I expected it to be; but there was too much sauce, and it was too thin. Yet they keep a cook like that! Dr. Paber proposed the first toast—that is, after Dr. Wrenzchen in the customary way had addressed a few words of welcome to his guests. Dr. Paber speaks very well, but he was not quite up to his subject, for he wished the young household a continuance of the happiness and peace which had hitherto prevailed.—I joined in drinking to their happiness, of course, for I am not an unnatural mother; still, I could not help inwardly smiling contemptuously at the “peace” that Dr. Paber had referred to. Peace, indeed, with such a clatterer in the kitchen! Ridiculous!

Herr Kleines then made a speech in rhyme; every one got a couplet. To me he addressed the lines:—

“Mothers-in-law are often *Fluchholz*,
Excepting, of course, Frau *Buchholz*.” *

All laughed at this except Herr Weigelt and I. He didn’t because his mouth happened to be full of potatoes at the moment, and I didn’t because I felt annoyed. There’s no such word at all in German as

* This, as will be seen at once, is a play upon the word *Buchholz*, which, being literally translated, means beech-wood. The word *Fluchholz*, literally *curse-wood*, Herr Kleines invented to serve his purpose both for rhyme and a hit at mothers-in-law.

Fluchholz, and it was invented only as a bit of malice and for the sake of rhyme. Is poetry to be used to cause unpleasantness to one's fellow-creatures? Did Lessing ever do anything of the kind? No, he was tolerant. If Herr Kleines had made some such rhyme for the girl Rieke in the kitchen, I should not have minded, and he would probably have received a pretty substantial reward from her for his poetic effusion. I had to sit still and suffer.

That the ground-rice pap was specially distasteful to me in this state of mind may easily be imagined. Herr Kleines, however, ate of it like a veritable German poet, whose hunger-belt—as Dr. Paber admirably remarked—had been loosened. Dr. Paber's masculine organ of taste, of course, refused to be pleased with the sloppy pap. "The stuff tastes of that Nothing out of which the world was created," said I.—"That is just what I think too," he replied, "but did not venture to say so."—In fact, I must say Dr. Paber is a very observant and cultivated man; and if Betti were to take his fancy, I might not exactly encourage him, but should, at least, not put any obstacle in his way.—Those who hadn't had enough supper could make up the deficiency with bread-and-butter and the cow's cheese, which was already somewhat high. However offensive the smell may be to the olfactory nerves of other people, the doctor can't do without it.

This meal, like everything else, came to an end at last—but not the milk-sop—there was enough left for a peasant's wedding-feast, where the eating and drinking is known to go on for three whole days.

After supper the gentlemen went to their card-tables, and we ladies were left to ourselves. Frau Lehmann had meanwhile thawed a little, and told us a number of delightful little anecdotes, and also knew of such amusing games with lucifer-matches—puzzling enough to crack one's brains—that the time passed pleasantly enough.—How sad it is, thought I, that in future I shall enter this house only as a visitor, without taking off my bonnet, when dropping in by accident, as it were.

At about two o'clock we all left. The servant-girl was standing at the front door holding a light, but also with a view of receiving gratuities from the guests for what they had received. I walked haughtily past that kitchen-fury without giving her as much as a glance. She shall learn what comes of rebelling against a mother when her child gives her first party. A pretty state of things!

CHAPTER XIX

EMMI IS URGED BY HER MOTHER TO TAKE A STRONGER LINE WITH THE DOCTOR

The second part of "The Buchholz Family" begins with a visit by Frau Buchholz to Emmi's flat, where she meets a Frau Lehmann. I omit the conversation with this lady as being of interest only in leading to an invitation which, as we shall see, Frau Buchholz accepts.

AS long as my daughter Emmi was still unmarried, I did believe that she might become happy with the man who, according to my idea, Providence had selected for her. But now I think the contrary, and can only suppose that human life develops as many varieties as the balsams we sow in flower-pots. We fancy that only well-developed, rosy-red blossoms will come up; but when they do appear, some of the flowers are of a most ordinary shade of violet, others are red, but single; whereas

not more than two or three show blossoms of the kind described in the catalogue. Some do not come up at all, or if they do, the buds drop off before opening.

Or is it that good fortune is not big enough for every one to have a slice, such as I and my Carl have had? Why is it that we are happy and content? Because Carl would most assuredly have had the highest respect for his mother-in-law, had it not been that she died before our marriage. I could swear that Carl would have acted very differently towards her from what Dr. Wrenzchen does towards me. I cannot, indeed, complain that he is wanting in polite speeches and phrases, but the more pleasant his manner, the more suspicious he appears to me; for, according to what cultured people say, those who excuse, accuse themselves. If he meant all he said, he would at once have packed off that cook of his, when she was not only rude, but insolent to me. A mother-in-law has as much right in the kitchen of her newly-married daughter as the daughter herself, especially when the young wife is inexperienced and is about to give her first party; for although there may be no question about treating the guests to a surprise, they ought at all events to be made to feel some degree of respect for the household arrangements. Therefore when a cook hinders a mother-in-law in this duty, planting herself in

front of the hearth, and, by making use of uncultivated language, forces the mother of her mistress to concentrate herself backwards out of the room, then, I say, it is the sacred duty of the son-in-law at once to fetch in the police, and to have the wretched creature locked up with all possible speed. Now as the doctor did not have this done, I know well enough what to think of his polite speeches and complacent remarks; these may be said to be the brazen shield of the arch-fiend, by means of which he wishes to thrust me off, that I may not have an opportunity of telling him the truth to his face. But he will find all that useless; opportunities cannot be thrust aside for ever. When once they do come, they come with the certainty of the multiplication table. And then we shall see!

I had at first resolved never again to cross the threshold on the other side of which I had been so shamefully treated without provocation. On second thoughts, however, it struck me: before Frau Buchholz submits to be chased away by a fury in the kitchen, things would need to be very different. One does not so readily give up one's innate privileges. Of course, when I go to the house I take no more notice of that cook than if she were mere air; not a look do I give her, not a "good-day," not even a condescending smile; I pass her by as if enshrouded in icy disdain, like a wet bathing-suit. And she—in

her thick-skinnedness—takes absolutely no notice of all this.

Emmi is always immensely pleased when I look in of an afternoon to coffee. Dr. Wrenzchen is at that time out on his rounds, and we can chat away undisturbed about things that men can't in the least understand. What astonishes me is that the girl has so quickly adapted herself to her position as a doctor's wife. She writes down the names of all the people upon whom he has to call, and takes great interest in his different patients; at times even she does not hesitate to make a bowl of strong beef-tea when the case is urgent, and a spoonful of soup is more needed than a spoonful of medicine. It is only on Thursdays, when the doctor goes to his Medical Society—where he plays *skat* till midnight—that Emmi feels lonely and forsaken.

“Child,” said I, “this is a misery that unfortunately you may have to endure to your dying day; but still you may consider yourself lucky, for there are husbands far more inconsiderate than yours, in fact, who have but three senses, like bears—those of eating, grumbling, and sleeping. You ought never from the first to have tolerated those Thursday-evening goings-out. I am afraid now that it may be too late to educate him.”

“If only I were not so utterly alone,” said Emmi, “you cannot think how wearisome the hours are when

I have to wait for him.”—“Do you stay up for him?”—“No, Franz will not have that!”—“So he sends you to bed, does he?”—“He thinks it better for me.”—“And all your worry about his not coming home counts for nothing, I suppose? Or can you go to sleep with an easy mind, while he turns night into day with his beer-drinking chums? I couldn’t!” “Mamma, what is it you have against Franz?”—“I? Nothing whatever, except these Thursday evenings and the cook.” “Oh, don’t bring up that old dispute, mamma; the girl has had her scolding and will not forget herself again. As to Franz, he bargained for these Thursday evenings from the very outset, and I agreed.”—“If you are happy as things are, it is not for me to interfere; you must know best what your nerves can stand. But what is the use of my talking my tongue sore, if you will neither see nor listen?”

Emmi was silent; she then asked: “What harm is there in his spending one evening in the week with his friends? I cannot have him gilded over and rolled up in wadding.”—“Is that a tone in which to speak to me, Emmi?”—“Mamma, you must remember I am a married woman now, and do not need to account to any one but my husband for what I do. You know I love you dearly, but I do not like to be treated as if I were still a school-girl.”—“And can you not understand that I am acting only for your

good?" I exclaimed, "do you think I do not notice that you are not as happy as you ought to be? Do you mean to say you look forward to your Thursday evenings?"

Emmi shook her head almost imperceptibly; but I saw it. After a time she said cheerily: "I mean to get a little dog; it will be a companion for me." . . .

"Your husband must positively be made to sacrifice his Thursdays to you," I replied, with decision; "and in any case you can arrange to spend the evenings with us when he goes out for his own amusement!"

"Without Franz?"

"If he leaves you to yourself, you can surely leave him once in a way!"

"No Mamma, I will not do that.

"I mean without any rudeness on your part, of course," I continued. "I shall send you both an invitation for next Thursday, to potatoes-in-their-skins and herrings, which I know he is so fond of. The following Thursday the Lehmanns might invite you, and so on, till we get him out of his irregular ways. He must be gently and imperceptibly chained to the family. If this proves unsuccessful you must try the plan of leaving home yourself one evening."

She shook her head thoughtfully.—"Think over what I have said," I added. "If he does not give in now, he never will; and the little bit of happiness

you ought to get out of your lives will be off before you know where you are. Think it over." I then brought my visit to a close.

That same evening I told Carl that I had invited Dr. Wrenzchen and Emmi to spend next Thursday evening with us. "Do not be surprised, however," said I, "if I have the herrings placed on the table undivided."—"Why such a new-fangled idea?" asked Carl, somewhat puzzled. "It is a delicate piece of domestic diplomacy, Carl," was my reply, "by leaving the herrings whole, Dr. Wrenzchen will be unable to pick out all the middle cuts for himself, as he did last time; he will have to eat the head and tail bits, like the rest of us."—"But supposing he likes the middle cuts best? You are generally disposed to give your fellow-creatures what they like best, Wilhelmine."—"I do, Carl, gladly, as you know; but in the present case it is a matter of education. He's not nearly old enough to have nothing but middle cuts."

CHAPTER XX

FRAU BUCHHOLZ AND BETTI EXPERIMENT IN ECONOMY AND DOMESTIC ART AND FAIL IN BOTH

WE paid a visit to the exhibition of cheap furniture that was being held in the glass building of the late Hygienic Exhibition, and as the prices asked for some of the articles, of really good workmanship, were astonishingly low, we purchased a wardrobe to replace the large clothes-press which had been standing in the passage. The lower drawers of the old one would never open properly if one wanted anything out in a hurry, and then too the thing was worm-eaten. Carl approved of the investment, for the new wardrobe is divided in the middle, and he can now have his realm all to himself, and no longer needs to grumble that his clothes are hung on the back pegs, and that when he wants some particular coat he is sure to lay hold of the wrong one.

When, however, the new wardrobe was put up,
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we found that it was smaller than the old piece of furniture, and hence that it did not cover the same space of wall. Now the piece of wall covered by the old press had never been papered, for I remember we bought a remnant of paper cheap and it proved hardly sufficient to paper the whole passage. We could not get it matched at the time, and thus the wall behind the press was left in its original condition, a bright blue in oil paint. But, of course, not a trace of this was seen when the old cupboard stood there.

"The whole passage will have to be repapered for the sake of that new piece of furniture," said Carl; "what shall we have gained by the change?"

"Don't trouble about that, wait and see how cleverly we shall manage it."

He shook his head as he went off, but did not venture to oppose me by slighting remarks.

I had said "we," meaning not only myself, but Betti and me, for without her help I should not have been able to carry out my idea.

Betti had, in fact, taken to painting lately, for she had no inclination whatever to become a governess, and yet did not wish to be without some regular occupation. And what was the use of her trying to pass a hard examination, simply to keep children tidy and to teach them a little spelling? Uncle Fritz too dissuaded her, by maintaining that "chil-

dren are horrid, they can do nothing but cry or sleep; the pleasantest moments in family life are when the children are asleep.”—My reply to this was: “You will talk very differently some day, my boy.”—Whereupon he answered, “I have certainly had to put up with noise enough from our club-poets, but I shall never get accustomed to infants’ music unless I invest in a pair of india-rubber ears.”

“Children’s voices are like angels’ voices,” said I, “but, of course, they need be one’s own children. Your vocal society, ‘The Whooping-Cough,’ no doubt makes a pretty hullabaloo; I wonder the neighbours tolerate such uproar.”—“They gain something by it, at all events; they would scarcely know what a mouse was like if they hadn’t preserved one in a glass case.”

Betti had always shown a taste for art. Even as a child she would cut out figures from the fashion papers, colour them neatly, and then gum them into an exercise book. And painting has become such a favourite occupation with ladies, that the most eminent artists give them lessons nowadays. And then to think what prices are now given for paintings! Menzel, a short time ago, got £4500 for one picture, and, as Betti says, he has not even used the most expensive colours. Such demands we, of course, should never make, although naturally one would like to cover one’s expenses.

Betti, to be sure, is only at the first stage yet, and paints upon articles of wood; still I must say she has been very diligent. She has painted three clothes-brushes—one for me, one for her father, and one for Dr. Wrenzchen—all three in flowers. They might have been bought at a shop, they are so artistically finished. If only the varnishing did not come so expensive. Betti tried to do it herself at first, but she never succeeded altogether, and could not manage to get a smooth surface properly. Smaller articles, such as plates, paper-knives, pocket-books, and little boxes, are very useful for giving away as presents; among our friends and acquaintances there are birthdays enough to make it difficult to overtake them all with any show of respectability.

So on the day in question I said to Betti: "There is now a chance for you to give a proof of your talent, and we will mightily surprise your father. What I want you to do is to paint in the pattern of the wall-paper where there is no paper on the wall, and to make it look exactly like the rest of the wall. He will be astonished when he finds that he can't distinguish between the deception and the reality, unless he examines it very carefully."

Betti, it is true, did think this would be too difficult for her, as she had never yet tried wall painting, a branch which was to be taken up later, under Gussow, when she had finished with painting on

wood, and had passed through a course of landscape painting, which is very carefully taught by the society of Lady Artists; still she said she was willing to try. From the outset I had looked forward to the moment when I should be able to say to Carl: "Now, then, what do you say to that? And to think that the expense would not be worth speaking about! Simply an instance of domestic art."

We took a couple of old cream jars and went to fetch the paint. It was not easy to find the right shades, but I hurried home and ripped a piece of paper off the wall from below the place where the press had stood. This I gave to the young man in the colour-shop, and it enabled him to understand exactly what we wanted, and he mixed the colours accordingly. When Betti saw this she was most anxious to set to work, a proof that she has the talent. The young man also selected the brushes, a large one for the grounding, and several smaller ones for working out the details. That same evening Betti sketched out the pattern, and on the following morning, as soon as Carl had gone to the office, we set about the work. That is to say, Betti undertook the artistic part, and I stood by to assist her with good advice. However, as she declared she could do nothing if I kept watching her, I went off to the kitchen. We were going to have pigeons for dinner, which Carl likes very much if they are carefully prepared,

and cooked briskly, with a little onion and parsley root; so I had enough to do. Cooks rather dislike preparing this dish, as it gives some trouble, and, moreover, they are apt to tell lies about it, by declaring that there were no pigeons of the kind to be had at the market.

However, before the last bird had passed through my hands, my motherly interest in Betti's artistic work induced me to go and see how things were progressing with the fresco painting. I found Betti in a not very amiable state of mind, for when I appeared in the passage she said rather shortly: "What is it you want?"—I noticed at once that something was amiss, for when Betti's voice has a snappish sound she is not given to be amiable, and so I said with the utmost gentleness: "Well, have you succeeded in accomplishing anything, my child?"

Betti came down off the kitchen steps, upon which she had been standing while pasting up the pattern she had sketched, and then examined the work from a prospective distance.

"Do you think it will do?" she asked.

What could I say? If I said "No," she was quite capable of replying: "Well, then, take the colours and brushes and do it yourself." If I said "Yes," then the painting would, of course, remain as it was, and Carl would have every reason to find fault, for

the result of Betti's work was really not much of anything.

So after having examined her work from different points of view, and with some show of artistic appreciation, I said: "Betti, the pattern seems remarkably like, but the colours do not quite correspond. Do you not yourself think that the colours are a few shades too light?"

"It *is* all too light," replied Betti, "yet how can this possibly be the case when the young man mixed the colours himself so carefully according to your pattern? Can it be the light, mamma? You know artists always complain that unless the light is right it spoils their best paintings."—I was about to agree to this possibility when a most unwelcome thought dawned upon me, and proved to be right. The fact was, I had taken, as a pattern, a piece of the wall-paper that had always been covered by the old clothes-press, and which, therefore, had retained its original and lighter colour.

"Now, mamma," said Betti in a tone of vexation, "why do you interfere with things when you know that you know nothing whatever about painting?"—"No, my dear," I replied, "you cannot say that of me; have I not climbed nine flights of stairs in the Vatican to see the genuine Raphaels and the other celebrities in oil?"—"The whole Vatican would be of no use to us here, mamma," interposed Betti; "I

shall have to go and get the proper colours.”—So she stripped off a piece of the darkened wall-paper and flew off to the shop, for she too was anxious to have finished before noon, and I was meanwhile left to my own thoughts. It seemed clear to me now that Art is by no means so very easy, and demands a goodly amount of genius as well.

When Betti returned she said: “Mamma, the work cannot be done in the way we imagined. First of all, a background has to be washed in, and when it is dry the pattern has to be painted upon it.”

“Who told you so?”—“The young man in the shop explained this to me; he has been at the Academy himself, it seems.”

“Has he studied under Gussow then, that he pretends to know so much?”—“I did not ask him that, but he did say that selling colours brought in more money than art.”

“He told you that, probably, by way of excusing himself. Think what an amount it would represent for Menzel to have sold £4500 worth of oil colours and floor varnish! He would need to have been selling the stuffs day and night. No, one cannot believe offhand what such a person says, and need know exactly what he means.”

While we were conversing in this way Betti had painted in the background with the large brush. There was some paint over, so I used it in trying

my hand at painting a wooden box, and did not find it very troublesome. "Betti," I exclaimed in glee, "we shall never again, after this, need to have painters in the house, we can do everything ourselves, and save a pretty penny."

When Carl came in to dinner, of course we could not conceal the painting that had been begun. He looked at it, shook his head, and said: "Wilhelmine, I am afraid the difference will be noticed. You had better give up the painting and have the whole passage repapered."

"And throw money out of the window," I exclaimed. "No, Carl, I'll not have that; and it's no encouragement to art to find fault with things at the very outset, in a hasty way. Wait a little, and then pronounce your judgment. To-morrow you will have a very different piece of work to criticise!" This proved to be true, but unluckily the work turned out very different from what I had anticipated.

What the reason was I do not know, but when Betti on the following morning painted in the pattern, the wall looked stranger than ever. "Betti," said I, "you have not quite the right knack yet, I think. What do you say to painting the whole wall one colour? Papa, it is true, prefers it being papered, but that's because he hasn't confidence in us;

he is sure to be quite satisfied when the passage is once done, and looks lovely.”

We sent the girl Doris to the colour shop with a pot sufficiently large to hold paint enough for the four walls, and I told her to bring another good-sized brush for grounding, as I meant to help in the work myself. We had decided in favour of sky-blue, having got the idea from the old unpapered patch on the wall, and because everything old-fashioned is again the fashion now.

We were anything but idle. Betti, mounted on the kitchen steps, undertook to see to the upper regions, while I, on my knees on the floor, attended to the lower parts. When we got to the end of our paint Dorris was despatched for more. It was a regular hurry-scurry.

“The only thing wanting now are visitors,” said Betti jocosely, for she was enjoying the painting as much as I was.—“That would be a pretty mess!” I exclaimed. “Betti, we must be quick and see that we are not interrupted, that the work is finished at once, before papa comes in.”

Haste, however, is both exhausting and mischievous. In her hurry Betti knocked the pot of paint off the steps, and the good blue paint splashed over the floor.

There is nothing more horrid than upset oil paint. We wiped it up. But it always seemed to come out

again. Nothing we could do would remove it altogether. By way of consolation I said to Betti: "The floor would in any case have required a coat of varnish. Doris will have to fetch some more paint soon, and so she may as well bring back some brown varnish for the floor at the same time."

"And a nice bright red for the border at the top and bottom of the wall," added Betti.

"Will one cupful be enough?"—"Let her take the large office jar," suggested Betti, and off Doris went.

Betti was right. A border did seem necessary to give our work an artistic finish. She hoped, as I myself did, that when once the red lines were drawn in, the unevenness of the painting would not be so conspicuous. Betti again mounted the ladder, and, as she had the ruler in one hand and her brush in the other, Doris had to stand below to hold up the paint pot.

After a time Doris ventured to remark: "Miss Betti, you really mustn't let the paint drop so, my jacket and my whole face are covered with paint." This was true enough, I must admit.

"And this jacket I put on to-day for the first time," Doris continued in a grumbling tone.—"Well, well," said I, "if the paint won't wash out you shall have a new one." With this I turned to my work again. A few powerful strokes with the brush and I could exclaim: "I've finished!"

But before I had got so far Betti had been muttering: "Mamma, I can't get the border to do, it keeps running down into the other colours. I feel quite desperate."

I must confess I had not expected very much from the border myself, and yet I have never in my life been so deceived about anything. Sure enough there was the red trickling down in long stripes into the blue, for all the world like the choicest of fringes. We tried to drive the red lines upwards with the blue brush, but this seemed only to make matters worse.

"We shall have to do it all over again to-morrow, from the very beginning," said Betti dolefully.

"All this mess over again!" I exclaimed; "just look how you have splattered yourself with paint, Betti, and look at Doris!"

"Sausage-making, which we used to do at home, is nothing to this!" exclaimed Doris.

I used up the remaining blue, by giving a final touch to the wall, Doris cleared away the pots and brushes, and then Betti and I went off to change our dresses. I could never have believed that oil-paint could have splashed so much, some had settled on the very back of my neck. And how difficult it is to get it out of one's finger-nails! It is perfectly astonishing what a speck of paint accomplishes when it gets on to the wrong place! What would the

towels be like? Things no longer looked very promising.

We had scarcely finished dressing, and tidied things up as far we could in the hurry, when Carl and Uncle Fritz came in. I recognised their voices in their exclamations at our handiwork.

"Don't let us go out to them," I whispered to Betti, "let them quietly recover from their first impression, for the first is always the strongest."

Then they came in. Carl, as I could at once see, was not in the best of humours, but Uncle Fritz's eyes actually beamed with delight, and mischievous jokes were flickering round about his mouth.

"Wilhelmine, did I not tell you . . .?" Carl began, in a reproachful tone. Uncle Fritz, however, interrupted him with a laugh: "No, Carl, old fellow, now don't prove yourself a barbarian in art, there's not another such landing as yours to be found in the wide world. Were you to exhibit it at the Cantian's Platz, you would assuredly get the large gold medal."

"I beg you not to make any such insulting remarks," said I; "when people have done their best, there's no need to cast ridicule upon them."

"You no doubt took the blue grotto in Capri as your model, Wilhelmine," continued Uncle Fritz, paying no heed to my remark. "If only you were

to tie a boat to the wardrobe, the thing would be perfect!"

"You needn't excite yourself," I replied, "our main object was economy, and that is quite beyond your comprehension as a bachelor."

"Economy!" exclaimed Carl, "what have you spent upon all this m . . . m . . . manœuvre?" (he struggled to find a mild expression, the dear, good fellow).

"The work itself is our affair, and thus will not cost a farthing; the rest of the things I have had put down to our account."

Carl called Doris, intending to send her to the colour shop for the bill. Doris came at once, as she heard herself called sharply. When she entered Uncle Fritz simply gave a roar of delight. The girl hadn't had time to wash off all the red paint, and would have presented an alarming appearance to any one who did not know what she had been about. Even Carl said, "Doris, you cannot possibly go out like that; the neighbours would think you had committed a murder."

I was uncommonly glad that Doris could not go out, and that I had time, by carefully leading the conversation, to get Carl off the subject of the bill. For as appeared afterwards, we had managed to squander such a considerable amount of paint, that the landing might as well have been repapered, and

without taking at all a cheap paper, as had, of course, to be done in the end. I did not tell Carl about Doris's ruined bodice and dress, which she insisted upon having made good to her, till the whole affair had been almost forgotten, and I had solemnly promised Carl never again to try domestic art upon doors or walls, but to employ skilled workmen, who earned their livelihood by the work. I had never imagined that economy, under certain circumstances, could lead to such an outlay of money.

And now we hear again of Herr Schmidt, the hero of the Tegel lake, who had mysteriously disappeared from the family's ken. Frau Buchholz one evening thought she saw him at a rather dissolute revel at the Bock, but was not sure. If so, he was with a fast-looking girl in a red paper cap. Then one Sunday every one went to the Regatta, Uncle Fritz with his customary convivial thoroughness having become a great rowing man, and there Frau Buchholz met Herr Max, the friend of the errant Schmidt, of whom Betti was still thinking too tenderly. Herr Schmidt was not with Max, who was nervous in mentioning his name, and stated that he had left Berlin, but added that he was not at liberty to go into details. Another unsatisfactory incident of the afternoon was the spectacle of the Bergfeldts drinking champagne.

CHAPTER XXI

FRAU BUCHHOLZ SITS TO A FAMOUS PAINTER AND IS BETRAYED INTO PREVARICATION

It will be remembered that when Frau Buchholz met Professor Paulsen with Dr. Stinde at the foot of Vesuvius, the Professor promised to paint her portrait. She did not then mean it, but circumstances alter cases. Visiting the Exhibition of pictures in the Cantian Platz the idea occurred again.

THE Exhibition is no doubt a practical kind of building, but, as its principal outward charm—as seen from the City line—seems to consist in its being water-tight, it cannot be said to lay claim to actual beauty. Its artistic contents we determined to examine in this way: that both of us were quietly to note the pictures that had pleased us best, so that when we came to make our second peregrination round the gallery there might be a mutual exchange of opinion. The plan failed, however, for when we

entered the first room we caught sight of the life-size figure of a man in uniform, which stood out from a purple curtain with a rich border of gold, in the most lifelike manner, and with an aristocratic look. "Who is that?" I asked Betti, forgetting the agreement we had made. She read out of the catalogue: "Friedrich Franz the Second, late Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin."—"I could see at once that it must be a prince," I replied. "Who painted it?"—"Fritz Paulsen," she said, reading on.—"Goodness, how it all seems to rise up before me!" I exclaimed. "Whatever can he have thought of me?"—"Why, mamma?"—"Well, child, when I was in Naples, I asked him whether he would paint my portrait some day, and it was almost arranged that he should."—"How very nice," Betti said, interrupting me; "a picture of you for papa's birthday. . . . You couldn't give him anything more beautiful."—"Child," said I, "what are you thinking about? Haven't I just had a most excellent photograph taken of myself, at Carl Günther's, which you were all delighted with?"—"And so we are still, but when I look at you, mamma—well, you seem just made for oils," said the girl, laughing. "How precious the picture would be to us all!" she continued in a more serious tone, "when . . ."—"When I am old and ugly," I added, smiling.—"I did not mean that," she answered, "but we might

not always be with you, and then, in looking at your portrait, it would be like having your dear self, life-like before us. Mamma, you *must* be painted.”—“If I were to be hung on my son-in-law’s wall, with a somewhat severe expression of face, Emmi might possibly be the better for it; there are proofs that the sight of a picture has roused a conscience for its own good.” After a little, I added: “Papa would grudge the money, I am afraid.”—“It wouldn’t be so very ruinous, and, mamma, you could pay for it yourself.”—“That would merely be taking from the debit and placing it in the credit,” said I, putting her off.—“All the little money I have put by, little by little, I would give towards it,” urged Betti. “Oh, I am so delighted at the thought of the picture!”

“We shall have to think the matter well over again,” said I, putting an end to the conversation. “But come now, Betti, and let us look at the pictures, as we proposed to do.”

While wandering from one long room to another, I was conscious that my thoughts were not paying proper heed to the pictures before me, but were more actively engaged—than I myself wished—with my future portrait. As often as I caught sight of the likeness of any lady, I asked myself, why was her portrait painted, and was she justified in having it done? In a good many cases the portrait had cer-

tainly not been painted for the sake of beauty, more probably for the sake of a likeness. Several were hung so high that it was impossible to judge in their case. When I came to think the whole matter over—my half-binding inquiry of Professor Paulsen in Naples, Betti's anxious wish, my Carl's surprise on his birthday, and the fact that I was not growing younger—made me see that I ought to give in without more ado. I beckoned to Betti and said, "I am wavering about giving in to all your wishes."—"Oh, how good of you!" exclaimed Betti in glee.—"But, Betti, I haven't sufficient artistic enthusiasm to make my heart take the decisive leap, I must find some picture that will disperse this last bit of uncertainty."—"Let us look for it, mamma, I will help you."

It cannot be denied that a great number of unusual pictures attracted our attention, and we could scarcely say enough in admiration of the modern masterpieces. Betti thought that the portraits in black—as if washed over with liquorice—seemed to be the most fashionable; but I was not in favour of that funeral style.—"What do you say to this?" she asked me, pointing to a portrait representing a tall lady in an olive-green velvet, and looking as if she would have a friendly reply for any one that addressed her.—"Ah, that would be exactly to my liking," said I; "only, I fancy my brown rep would

suit me better, and then only about half as large; the smaller frames are sure to be less expensive.”—“Well, have you quite decided now, mamma?” asked Betti.—“If you think that papa . . .”—“That’s sure to be all right,” she said, rejoicing, putting her arm round me; “you dear, good mother, and so you’re really going to be painted!”—“Child, child,” said I, “you are crushing me to bits. Now let us see who painted that portrait.”—“Here it is in big letters in the corner,” she replied, pointing to the name. “Fritz Paulsen!” said I, reading it. It was quite clear to me now; it was the decree of fate.

By the time we left the Exhibition I had made up my mind that Carl should have the surprise on his birthday, for Betti assured me that paintings were not only of lasting value, but that their value increased year by year.—“If they do that, then there can be no loss,” I replied; “and we haven’t got to feed them. . . .”

Frau Buchholz therefore called on Professor Paulsen at his studio. She was received by his waiting-woman, Bachmann, who is, I imagine, drawn from life, Stinde and Paulsen being such intimate friends.

We sat down in a comfortable corner. The Professor asked me whether I had had lunch, and would not hear of my declining to partake of some refreshment. The woman Bachmann was ordered to bring

me something; a good cup of soup and a little cold meat. While taking our lunch we discussed the portrait; Herr Paulsen was not in favour of my brown rep from an artistic point of view; he thought some decided colour would suit me better. So then I suggested my claret coloured dress, which he approved of. I was to give him my first sitting the following day, and in order that my Carl might not notice anything, he proposed that I should send my dress to his house, where it would be carefully placed in the old German cabinet. The woman Bachmann, he said, would help me to arrange my dress, as she was accustomed to do this. I asked if Betti might come with me, for it occurred to me that my daughter might gain something by watching him paint, and perhaps get some artistic hints. However, he said he would prefer that she did not come till after the third sitting, when she would be able to judge of the likeness. He would, he said, be very glad to see her then. . . .

The picture went on very satisfactorily, and after a few sittings the Frau again lunched with the painter.

The little refreshment did me good, and the wine was excellent; I could not remember to have ever tasted anything like it, and therefore asked where it came from. It struck me that if the price were not too exorbitant, I might tell Carl to get some for his

birthday. "This Johannisgarten I get direct from a friend of mine, Otto Sartorius, the proprietor of a vineyard in Mussbach in the Rhenish Pfalz," he replied.—"Does your friend supply other people as well?"—"Send him an order and see; you will be satisfied with what he sends you, I am sure. . . ."

I could not conceal from myself the fact that I should be too late for dinner, a thing that otherwise never occurred. So I had to think of excuses to give Carl; but he always notices directly when things are not straightforward, so that I am not at all a good one at inventing stories. . . .

At home I found them waiting for me. Carl, however, when he saw my embarrassment, welcomed me with the words: "Was the bridge drawn up that you couldn't pass? or did you get into a wrong tramcar?"—"No," I answered hotly, "you needn't imagine me so stupid as that. I have been trying to find out where we can get a good and proper sort of wine."—Carl looked at Betti, and Betti looked at him, and both burst out laughing, which made me feel very uncomfortable. "What are you giggling at?" I asked, a little put out.—"So she's been wine-tasting!" said Carl gaily.—"Yes, that she has!" I exclaimed, angered by the ridicule, and threw the address of the wine merchant upon the table. "Here's the address if you want to have it, and you may order the wine for your birthday yourself, it

will give me no pleasure now to do it after the way you have met me.”——“Wilhelmine, if I had only known——” Carl began by way of excusing himself.—“It’s the nature of you men; you are for ever, with your rough hands, destroying the delicate threads of affection that women weave for you. But I’ll forgive and forget, if only you send off the order to-day. You may as well order wine for punch at the same time. Come, don’t crumple the address in that way! And now let us have dinner.”

We were pretty silent during dinner. I was sorry to have drawn such a thunderstorm down upon Carl, but if I hadn’t, he would assuredly have got to the bottom of the secret about the portrait, and, moreover, I should have had double trouble in getting him to order the wine. If Professor Paulsen pays us a visit, we can’t offer him anything less good than what he is accustomed to.

Carl took his dinner hurriedly, and said “*Gesegnete Mahlzeit*” before we others had had our second helping. I was about to run out after him, to tell him that things were not as bad as they seemed, when Betti began: “Why were you so angry, mamma?”—“I angry?”—“Well, you seemed so, at least.”—“And I had good reason to be annoyed.”—“No, mamma, you hadn’t.”—“Indeed!”—“What I mean, is, that when you were so long in coming home, papa got anxious, and kept on saying: ‘Where

can mamma be?' I tried to make excuses, but you know that when papa is serious and asks a question point-blank, one has to tell him the truth."—"Well?"—"So I told him that he must remember that his birthday was in a day or two."—"Betti, how could you go and tell tales?"—"I knew that papa would be content with that, and it was the truth also. If you had met his jokes in a cheery way, all would have been well. Really, this time I do not know who acted most stupidly."—"Betti! is that the way to speak to me?"—"I did not mean to be rude, mamma, but I am old enough now to see that you would have gained more by giving in."—"It's a new thing to hear such remarks from you, Betti," said I.—She got up, and said in a low voice: "I once thought there was some happiness for me in life—we never spoke about it, mamma—but it has all passed away now; we have both of us been silent about it, you and I; what was the use of words? You know it as well as I. The love I thought of giving to that one person, I mean now to divide between you all, as well as I can. Now you know why I have come to look at things differently from what I did. Forgive me, mamma, if I hurt you by what I said. I did not intend to."

She went away and I was left alone with a heavy heart. Betti had resigned herself to her fate; the spring of her life was past! It was well that no one

saw how I cried. When I recovered I determined that henceforth her life should be made as pleasant as it was in my power to make it. Not an unkind word should ever cross my lips; and if any one should worry her again, they'd suffer for it!

Carl had gone to lie down, as was his usual way after dinner; we had knitted him a large sofa blanket for these after-dinner naps. I went to him. When I opened the door he raised his eyes. "Carl," said I, "if you don't care about ordering that wine, leave it."—"What is it, Wilhelmine?" said he, without much interest.—"You hadn't any appetite to-day, Carl dear?"—"No, I hadn't."—"Was it my fault?"—"I didn't say it was."—"Carl, I was a little excited."—"It seemed to me you were. I would advise you, in future, not to go in for wine-tasting, you cannot stand a mixture of things."—"Now, Carl, that's a return shot at me. Are you angry, Carl?"—"No, I'm not; for you can't alter your natural disposition. Why should I be angry?"—"Carl," said I, "you've been a very jewel all your born days. I confess I was more violent than need be; but still, have I ever wished my children a better father than you? The hour will come when I shall stand justified before you; it is not very far off, believe me. Now this evening you shall have the best of beefsteaks for supper, as you ate no dinner. Will you have it cooked with onions or with egg, Carl dear?"—

“With both?”—“And I’ll have a glass of genuine Munich beer fetched for you; nobody shall say I haven’t a warm heart for you. Now shut your eyes for a little more sleep; when it’s time for you to be off to the office, I’ll come and wake you.”—Before I went I gave him a kiss, which pleased him very much. The angel of reconciliation had descended upon us and held watch by his couch. He was well tucked up, too . . .

A few more sittings and the portrait was done.

A slight degree of stage-fever seized me, however, when the day came upon which Carl was to be surprised. On the previous afternoon Professor Paulsen came himself, when the picture was to be hung up in our best sitting-room; he wished to see it placed in a proper light, so that even in this respect nothing was omitted. Afterwards I locked the door and took away the key. Betti was all expectation, and kept singing to herself, a thing I had not heard her do for long.

In the morning we had our coffee with a cake, as upon any other birthday, and we gave Carl several useful things, which pleased him very much. Then I went and unlocked the room and called through the door, “Carl, there’s some one in the best room wanting to see you.”—He seemed a little vexed at being disturbed, but hurried out and we followed him on tiptoe quietly. There he stood as if lost in

contemplation of the picture, but Betti's shoes creaked and he turned round and saw us. "Wilhelmine," he said, with emotion, "my good wife, you could not have given me a greater pleasure than this." He drew me to him and kissed me on the forehead and mouth. Betti clapped her hands in delight. "Was I not right, mamma? If only parents would always follow their children's advice!"—Carl turned to her and smiled, and then put his other arm round her. This was a birthday such as we had never had, we were so utterly, so heartily happy and content.

"Do you like the portrait, Carl?" said I, for of course one likes to have an opinion. "Do you think the likeness good?"—"It is you to a nicety," was his answer, "and yet there is something more in it than that; it seems to me as if I had you there again as you were when my bride, as you looked in the days of our first love, do you remember?"—"You mean I look too youthful there, Carl?"—"No, not at all, but it awakens my old recollection, and now when I look at you yourself, I see exactly the same expression still in your features. The artist has succeeded in bringing it out more distinctly than we are accustomed to see it."—"So now you are no longer vexed about my having been late for dinner that day? I had just returned from my first sitting——" He laid his hand gently on my mouth. "The storm

passed by very quickly, and it has never really come down upon us, although, at times, there has seemed a good deal of thunder in the air.”—“Carl, remember I have often had the big washing in my head, and——”—“Wilhelmine, is the picture to have its laugh at you? Look how kindly and pleasantly the painted Frau Buchholz can look down at me.”—I laughed and said: “Well, I have hung up a nice warning to myself.”—The door bell then rang. “Children,” I exclaimed, “there are visitors coming—probably Emmi and Dr. Wrenzchen!”

And so it was. My son-in-law wanted to offer his good wishes before going off on his rounds, and left Emmi with us for the whole day. The portrait pleased them immensely. Dr. Wrenzchen asked me in private what it cost; I pacified him by saying that it might one day be his. In the evening we had a pretty large gathering of friends, and Carl—that best of men!—had actually arranged for us to have “Johannisgarten;” this came as a surprise for me, and so the merriment lasted far into the night.

Before getting into bed I went to take a last look at my portrait, and said: “I will do my utmost—this I vow; but to be superhuman is a thing that can’t be expected of me, not by any portrait in the world.” Carl, who came to see what was keeping me, said: “Why, Wilhelmine, this is ghostly in the extreme; you look as if you were playing the part of the

White Lady, in the picture gallery among the portraits of her ancestors!" However, I could not reveal my deeper feelings to him at the moment—he was in too jocose a mood.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BUCHHOLZES MAKE AN ENTRY INTO FASHION- ABLE SOCIETY AND RETURN FAMISHED

A FORTNIGHT ago we received a card the size of a calendar for hanging on a wall, with the words:

“Assessor Lehmann and his wife do themselves the honour of inviting Herr and Frau Buchholz and daughter to tea on the evening of Saturday, the 17th of January, at 8.30 o’clock. R. S. V. P.”

“Carl,” said I, “this is a case of a dress-coat and a white tie for you, and a very important matter as regards dress for Betti and me. I can manage easily, for I shall only need to have my claret-coloured silk, the one I had for the wedding, a little altered. As to Betti, we have found in the last number of the *Modenwelt* a gem of a dress, which will do admirably for the season.”

“Season,” exclaimed Carl, “what do you know about the season?”

"If the Lehmanns give a tea party, then it's the season," I replied; "Frau Lehmann herself told me that they had to do as others did, their social position demanded it."—"Isn't it more likely that she persuades herself to believe such things?"—"Carl, they have an old Excellency in the family and want to show him off; whether they give their guests any enjoyment by it, we had better not say."—Carl laughed, and replied: "Excellencies are always well worth seeing."—Whereupon my remark was: "I heartily wish them joy of their Excellency. Heaven knows what good they get of such things. Costly surroundings and a very meagre effect!"

The Wrenzhens were, of course, invited too. Emmi, who did not know whether we had all been invited from the Landsbergerstrasse, came round to inquire; she wanted also to leave her little dog at our house while she was out, as the animal cannot bear being left with the cook. "Emmi," said I, "that innocent creature might be a warning to you from higher regions, that your cook is a bad character, and it would be wise for you to give her notice to leave. Dogs have a very fine knowledge of mankind; your cook must one day have given the creature a secret kick in its ribs, which it cannot forgive. I can sympathise with it there."

"Mamma," replied Emmi, "Maffi does not really like anybody except Franz and me, and is so fond

of barking that he snarls at every one, especially when my husband is called out of an evening to a patient.

All this trouble about the pug the doctor puts up with, owing to those Thursday evenings; he even went himself with Emmi to choose the material for a new dress, and was not as stingy as usual. When I praised him for this in a jocosé way by saying, "Now, now, my dear son-in-law, such outlays are altogether out of keeping with your domestic arrangements," he replied: "They would be double what they are had we gone into a large house, as somebody suggested." I knew very well that that was a hit at me, but I smiled, saying: "If the house is small, there are beer parties enough to make up for it!"—And thus he got what he deserved; but in spite of my momentary triumph, I felt more convinced than ever that before long there will be a clash between us, and neither the pug Maffi nor Emmi's dress will prevent it. But Emmi will then know what she owes to herself and to her family.

As our invitation was for half-past eight o'clock, we went at about ten o'clock, and arrived in very good time, for the grander an evening is to be, the more abominably late the guests appear. We were far from being the last to arrive, but his old Excellency was already there, and, to a certain extent, formed the brilliant centre of light, owing to his

bald head and his numerous decorations. We were presented to him at once, and His Excellency expressed himself as being very pleased to have the privilege of making our acquaintance. Whereupon I replied, with the most formal of curtses and visible solemnity, that the privilege was all on our side. By so doing I wished him to see that although we belonged only to the middle class, we were by no means overawed by Excellencies. His Excellency then entered upon a long talk with my Carl about business in general, which I considered wanting in tact, as he might have known that ladies took no great interest in such subjects. I moved aside, therefore, with a less deep but well-measured curtsy, and amused myself by watching the other guests. The number of persons the Lehmanns had invited was endless. To remember them all one would need have been born with a memory the size of an omnibus.

After a time I found myself near the seats of honour, namely, round about the sofa where the elderly and most voluminous ladies made a solemn impression by their very dignified appearance and the brand-new ribbons of their caps. Tea was taken without so much as the sound of a word, and with it there was handed round a fruit tart and small narrow knives to eat it with.

What was there to talk about? All of us being

perfect strangers to one another, no one, of course, cared to open their mouths with a remark about the weather; then one doesn't seem to know enough about the theatres; and household affairs are naturally too inferior a subject for the occasion. Guests were, moreover, still coming in, and the crush was so great, one might have supposed the Lehmanns had annexed the waiting-room of a railway station, and that some official would presently be ringing a bell and calling out: "Take your seats, please!"—I kept thinking to myself: "I wonder what's to happen next? If we had been in the Landsbergerstrasse we should all long since have been sitting round the supper-table, and would know what we had been invited for."

The room was now crammed full, and I was secretly beginning to denounce the season and these fashionable gatherings, when some one began to play on the piano. The Lehmanns had managed to secure the services of a youth from one of the conservatoires; he wore huge linen cuffs, only three pairs of which could go to the dozen. This youth then attacked Mozart and the audience too; it was a perfect bashing. This roused the canary out of its sleep, and it forthwith began singing at the top of its voice and utterly drowned the music that followed. In fact the musical entertainments could not be continued till the bird's cage had been covered over.

A young lady then rose and filled the room with her shouting. Of melody, in my opinion, there was nothing to be heard, but the effect was all the more melancholy. As soon as the applause ceased, she commenced a second performance. It was of the same doleful colour, enough to give a drill-sergeant the blues. When the accompanist had wrung out a few melancholy chords by way of conclusion, I said to the lady on my right: "There now, the second child's dead too!"—"Whatever do you mean?" she asked.—"Oh," I replied, "that's what we say when a mournful piece of music comes to an end."—"It was my daughter that was singing," she retorted in a stinging way, and turning her back upon me.

In order to show her that her behaviour had left me perfectly cool and indifferent, I turned to the lady on my left and endeavoured to start a conversation with her, and began by speaking of a flaxen-haired youth, above life-size, who had at that moment entered the room, and seemed a fitting subject for remark.—"What kind of genius is that, I wonder?" said I.—"Whom do you refer to?" replied the lady.—"That very long young man standing there at the door," said I; "you just wait and see if he doesn't cause mischief."—"I am not aware that my son has given you any reason for such a remark," she answered snappishly.—"Pardon me that ever I was born," I replied, remembering that what

one calls out into a wood, the echo brings one back.

I vowed to myself not to utter a single word more, as I could not possibly know in what relation all these people, whom the Lehmanns had collected in honour of His Excellency, stood to one another; so I allowed my thoughts to speculate about the ways of fashionable society. From these gloomy reflections I was fortunately aroused by supper being announced.

In the next room, which had been kept locked all the evening, a side table had been arranged with all possible kinds of eatables, and presented a very inviting appearance when the doors were thrown open. The gentlemen hurried in and gallantly attended to the ladies. Those ladies, however, who had no special gentleman to attend to them, and who did not choose to push themselves forward, got nothing. I was among the last to reach the manger, and succeeded only in snatching hold of a small dessert plate and a knife and fork, at the same time I saw that all such dainties as caviare, *patés de foie gras*, and chicken, had already vanished. Of the turkey nothing was left but the skeleton, and of the fillet of veal only the mark on the dish where it *had* been. There was, however, still some Italian salad to be had, also some cold sliced meat which, upon closer inspection, proved to be American tinned meat and Brunswick sausage. The jellies, too, had scarcely

been touched. I took a small helping of what was left, and while eating it in discomfort in the midst of a standing crowd, it struck me that one needed experience in this kind of stand-up supper, as not a soul thinks of pressing one to take anything; in fact, the whole proceeding seemed to me a kind of murderous attack, and so I quietly envied the sub-lieutenants who had been in front of the battle. Betti told me afterwards that her lieutenant had brought her a delicious bit of the breast of a chicken, while he had preferred venison with a goodly supply of caviare. The younger folks had, it seemed, been making engagements with one another, as there was to be dancing later. The Lehmanns thought it better taste to let His Excellency depart first, so there was a little delay. Wine and punch was handed round, and this brought more life into the conversation; His Excellency was meanwhile standing beneath the chandelier, holding a kind of audience.

At the beginning of the evening I had stated that that unusually tall young man would be likely to create trouble, and I proved to be right. When I have a presentiment of anything, it always comes true, and moreover, so precisely like what I had imagined, that I should assuredly have been anointed a prophet had I lived in the Old Testament.

All of a sudden a fluttering, flapping noise passed through the rooms, and it very soon turned out that

the canary had escaped. The young man just mentioned, having nothing better to do, no doubt meant merely to amuse himself with the little creature, but his huge awkward hands must have so bent the cage door that it would not close again.

And now the fuss that was made in trying to catch the bird. Several brooms and a pair of steps were fetched, and an endeavour was made to drive the creature into the adjoining room so as to catch it if it were to settle on the cornice. The bird, however, would neither go into the next room nor on to the cornice. The chase became more and more eager and determined, and the bird became the more bewildered. The young man who had caused the mischief took part in the chase, and in this way tried to make up for his awkwardness; but just as he was about to make a very vehement thrust with a broom, as if he were playing billiards in the air, he accidentally struck the glass chandelier beneath which His Excellency was standing, and fragments of glass came pouring down upon His Excellency's shining pate.

Although His Excellency was in no way injured, he at once intimated a wish to withdraw, and thus left the company which harboured so dangerous an individual. This greatly distressed the Lehmanns, who seemed quite to lose their heads. They accompanied His Excellency to the door, and the

Hamburg doctor meanwhile caught the bird, and the dancing commenced. The young people enjoyed themselves immensely, as usual on such occasions, but I did not breathe freely till we were on our way home in a 2nd class "rib-breaker," leaving the stifling heat, the badly arranged refreshments, the host of people to whom we were utterly indifferent, in one word, fashionable society, behind us.

When we reached home, my Carl said: "Wilhelmine, if you feel as I do, you'd butter us some bread and let us have a couple of bottles of wine. I'm quite hungry."—"That's just what I do feel," I answered. So there we sat down at three o'clock of a dark winter's morning, in a cold room with ice on the windows, and refreshed ourselves after all the hardships we had endured.

CHAPTER XXIII

A TERRIBLE DISASTER OCCURS AT THE DOCTOR'S
HOUSE, AND FRAU BUCHHOLZ MAKES
THINGS WORSE

A LITTLE before supper time Emmi came in, and I at once noticed that something was wrong. Here we have it, at last, thought I. I took her into the adjoining room, where supper was laid, and said: "Well, have you come to blows, already?" "I was weary at home," she replied, "and if Franz chooses to go out to play *skat*, surely I may go out too if I please."—"Haven't I always told you that? You ought long since to have shown more spirit. Is he coming to fetch you later?" She shook her head negatively. "Have you really had a quarrel, Emmi?"—"No, not exactly; but is he always to be in the right?"—"Why, I should think not!"—"You know, Mamma, that I conscientiously keep an exact account of every small purchase I make, even the milk for Maffi."—"By the way, did you bring the

creature with you?"—"No, he was sleeping when I came away, and I did not care to spend money for a cab on his account. But I want to tell you that Franz maintains it's not the writing down all the items that makes a good housewife, he says it's in keeping down the accounts."—"Was it about that you got angry?"—"I merely said he could go and look in the store-room, and he would know where the money had all gone to. I had got in two hams, the string of sausages, butter, and a lot of other things besides."—"But, Emmi, what makes you buy so much at a time, when you can have things in fresh when you need them? If you have too much in the house, the things will only spoil."—"Our cook thought we hadn't enough provisions in the house, and Franz doesn't understand these things. It was she, too, who advised me to go out this evening, for she said it would be the best way of putting an end to such disputes."—"Emmi, I cannot honestly say that your husband is wrong in the present case," said I, for I had no wish to take the cook's part. "One thing, however, I do approve of is, that you have made a beginning in showing him that you can take refuge in your parents' house. You just wait and see if we shall not all of us remember this Thursday." And verily we did remember it. The day is one that will dwell in the memories of us all, however old we may live to be. How I do repent ever

having advised Emmi to give tit for tat, in order to get her husband under her thumb. How terribly I had to atone for it all afterwards. And yet I had no presentiment whatever that the tragedy would begin that very evening; otherwise I should assuredly have said: "Emmi, you had better go home, things are looking rather askew."

Emmi herself did not seem to be feeling altogether comfortable. She had no appetite, and the later it got the more restless she became. It was somewhat the same with me also. I kept thinking, "What if Dr. Wrenzchen should get wild with rage? They had hitherto lived in the utmost harmony—that is to say, all excepting his Thursday evenings out. Yet, had he not stipulated for them at the outset?" A chilly feeling would creep up my spine when I thought that if anything happened I should be blamed for it all, and should never again venture to look my Carl in the face. I was on the point of saying to Emmi: "Don't you think you had better be going? Uncle Fritz will see you home," when we heard a violent ring at the front door. Emmi stared at me, and I at her. It was only misfortune that could have rung the bell in that way.

My Carl, who saw that neither of us were capable of moving, and had long since noticed that things were not all square, went out to see who was there. He was a horribly long time in coming back, so it

seemed to me; and when he did return, he called me out of the room. I had made up my mind, of course, that I should probably have to face Dr. Wrenzchen in some degree of wrath; in place of this I found a policeman standing in our entrance; he, in a very formal way, gave us to understand that Dr. Wrenzchen's house had been broken into, and added that he had been requested to see that the Doctor's wife was informed of the fact in as gentle a way as possible. The Doctor had also commissioned him to say that if the lady were at all afraid, she was to remain over night at the Landsbergerstrasse.

Emmi, who had hurried out of the room after us, heard all the policeman had said, but nothing would induce her to remain with us. So a cab was quickly procured, and without even bidding the Krauses good-night, we drove off to Dr. Wrenzchen's house.

We found a pretty state of things there. Dr. Wrenzchen was trying to discover what had been stolen; one policeman helped him in this, another kept watch at the door, and a third was examining the rooms, and entering notes in a pocket-book. Emmi flew to Franz, who greeted her at once with the words: "Things are not so very bad after all. They've not carried off much money; luckily I went to the bank this morning, and the other things can be replaced in time." She was about to beg forgiveness for having left the house, but he called it a

lucky accident that she happened to be out, as otherwise she might have fared as badly as the servant girl, whom the robbers had gagged with a towel to prevent her calling out, and had also locked her up in a room bound hand and foot; he had found her half unconscious, in this state, when he came in.

Their rooms did, indeed, present a most murderous appearance. In place of newly-married neatness and order, that affects the very bones in the larder, everything was in a state of confusion, as if an auction were being held. The robbers had pushed away the escritoire from the wall, and had damaged the writing-table. The doors of a wardrobe were standing open, and clothes were lying about on chairs and on the floor. The doctor's best dress suit had been taken, and an older suit left for him to wear. All the silver was gone, except the candelabra presented to the Doctor at his wedding. Uncle Fritz noticed this, and called out triumphantly, "Now you see they are only plated goods!" The store room had been ransacked: the hams and sausages were gone. The thieves had not shown a spark of reverence for anything.

In consequence of the men's muddy boots, moreover, the house looked as if a caravan had marched through it. Perfectly dreadful! And then the unpleasant consciousness that the robbers, with their thieving hands, had been rummaging about in boxes

and drawers, doing so probably amid rude jokes, and ridiculing things that were of no value to them, but precious to the young people for recollection's sake. On all sides there were traces of the thieves, and the place even smelt of them. The poet, it is true, says: "Sacred unto all time are the abodes of good men"; but I would say, any abode that has been touched by bad men one will not readily like again in one's life. The Doctor will have to move; no long day of cleaning and scrubbing would ever destroy the picture of horror and desolation those rooms presented. And the burglars—where were they? They had vanished like any lovely dream.

The police forthwith took a statement of what had occurred. The servant-girl was called, and came in with a pocket-handkerchief at her eyes. The people on the floor above, too, a Herr Greve and his wife and daughter, were asked to come down and state what they knew of the matter.

The result of all the questionings and answers was—that as soon as Frau Wrenzchen had left the house, a man came to fetch the Doctor to see some sick person. The servant-girl had told him where the Doctor was to be found, whereupon the man had replied that perhaps it would be time enough if the Doctor came early in the morning, and asked to be allowed to write down the address. The girl said that she let the man in, but that, at the same mo-

ment, a second man had forced his way in, and clapped his hand tightly over her mouth to prevent her screaming; she said she became unconscious then from fright, and when she recovered found that she could neither scream nor move, as she was gagged and bound hand and foot. The Doctor had found her in this state when he came in. Dr. Wrenzen corroborated the girl's statement, but expressed his astonishment at having, when he came in, found all the doors unlocked, though closed. When he saw what had occurred, he at once called a watchman, and then hurried to summon the police; they immediately declared that the gagging and fettering of the girl, as well as the robbery, must have been committed by several persons; that this was proved alone by the heavy escritoire having been moved from the wall. Herr Greve and his wife maintained that they had not heard any noise in the slightest degree suspicious.

"What did the rascals look like?" the girl was then asked. She said she couldn't exactly say, but remembered that both of them had full black beards. "How could you be so careless to let in suspicious-looking men, with black beards like swindlers?" said I to her. The impertinent creature answered that she couldn't tell what people were by looking at their noses. "Why did you not call for help?" She replied that as I wasn't a police-inspector, she didn't

need to answer me. "If you'd a clear conscience you wouldn't be so insolent," I replied.—What did I mean by that?—I might have my own ideas; perhaps the provisions were bought expressly for the thieves?—I should have to give an account of such speeches.—"With pleasure," said I; "I know you well, and think you capable of anything." The doctor was about to interfere, but I exclaimed: "Depend upon it, she's had her hand in this business; nobody will make me believe otherwise." The girl then flew into a passion, and I can't say what my answers to her were, for she was so utterly wanting in respect. She called the police and Herr and Frau Greve to be witnesses that I had insulted her, and attacked her honour as a respectable servant. The police replied that all this would be enquired into when the case came to be investigated.

The police then withdrew, leaving us in the utmost state of excitement. The girl was despatched to make coffee, and we tidied up the rooms, in order that they might recover some sort of physiognomy. The thieves did not seem to have entered the bedroom; but when we came to look and see whether one or other might not have crept under the bedsteads, we found Maffi Pamph lying there dead, with a cord round its neck. They had murdered it, no doubt, amid cold smiles. Herr Greve now remem-

bered to have heard the dog barking, but had not thought anything further about the matter.

While we were drinking our Mocha, which the girl brought in, casting a wrathful look at me, Uncle Fritz said: "You'll see, Wilhelmine, that that girl will bring an action against you."—"She would never presume to," said I, laughing at the idea. "You were more excited than you had any right to be," said Carl reproachfully. "Carl," said I, "if she had met you as she did me about those craw-fish, you'd never have kept quiet so long. She had to catch it from me, and that pretty smartly."

Dr. Wrenzchen was most affectionate and gentle towards Emmi, and declared it to be a merciful dispensation that his wife should have taken it into her head to pay us a visit on that very evening, and that a great catastrophe had perhaps been thus warded off.

"Just so," said I, and smiled at Emmi in a knowing way. We two, of course, knew all the ins and outs about that "dispensation," and how it had been set to work. It had been set agoing by Frau Buchholz, who at that moment was dipping a bit of cake into her coffee.

CHAPTER XXIV

FRAU BUCHHOLZ SUDDENLY BECOMES A CRIMINAL
AND IS PLUNGED INTO DESPAIR AND SHAME

THE investigations concerning the robbery at Dr. Wrenzchen's house had been concluded, and had led to no further result than that a safety chain and a new lock were put on his front door. The Police-lieutenant's wife told me that the robbery had been done according to the usual method of house-breakers, and Dr. Wrenzchen had no choice but to submit to the loss of his silver. I advised him to ask a somewhat higher fee from his patients, so as gradually to recover his loss, but this he refused to do; so now they take their meals with plated goods, which is in keeping with their candlesticks.

The cook gave notice that she wished to leave, and to my great relief, they did not persuade her to remain, especially as the girl gave as her reason for wishing to leave, that she did not mean on every oc-

casion to be pulled up by the mother-in-law, and that, moreover, she meant to show that lady that there was justice to be had in Berlin. Dr. Wrenzen tried to persuade the girl to be reasonable, but her answer was that she had been called "a base deceiver," and that she wasn't likely to forget that.

I myself doubted whether she could have accused me of using such words; yet Dr. Wrenzen declared he had heard me say something of the kind, amid other invectives, and he came round to ask me to offer the girl some compensation in money, so as to induce her not to make any further fuss.—"Do you mean to think that I would eat humble pie for that wretched creature?" I answered indignantly; "if I were to do that, it would seem as if I acknowledged myself in the wrong."—"Do as you please, dear mother-in-law, but as the girl was acquitted of the charge of conniving . . ."—"She's nevertheless far from being innocent in my eyes."—"I would advise you to withdraw your accusations."—"I shall not demean myself by any such act of submission; it would be an unheard of proceeding for her to bring an action against me. It's perfectly impossible!"

It proved however to be perfectly possible. One morning after Carl had gone to his business, a letter was handed in for me, a larger one than I had ever received in my life before, and its very outward ap-

pearance, the very look of the envelope made me suspect some terrible communication. With trembling hands I subscribed my name to the paper the postman had handed in for a receipt, and then I opened the letters. Inside were the words: Respecting the case of the private action presented by Maria Johanna Band, spinster, against Frau Wilhelmine Buchholz for abusive language. . . . I could not read a word more. The letters I could see, of course, but could not make the slightest sense out of them, they so danced before my eyes. This alone seemed clear, I was summoned to appear in court.

There was no help for it, I had to go to Carl, and yet when I stood before the office door with the letter in my hand, I hadn't the courage to enter. I took hold of the bell, and then let go again; I again took hold of it, but felt I did not dare to ring. Carl had, as yet, no idea what a disgrace was hanging over our heads, and that a public accusation had been brought against his hitherto blameless wife. But, of course, I could not stand there for ever. I opened the door gently and tottered up to his desk. "Carl," said I, timidly, "do read this extraordinary document—it is—it has—I can't understand it." Carl read the paper, and his face assumed a stern expression. "This is vexatious," he exclaimed, "more than vexatious! There are nine charges."—"Nine?" I cried out in amazement, interrupting

him.—“Yes, nine several points; they are mentioned singly; there, you can read it yourself.”—“Carl, the girl’s impertinence surpasses belief; I merely said that she ought to have taken more care.”—“Wilhelmine, you quite forgot yourself that day in your anger.”—“I said no more than I had a right to.”—“That will be proved when the case is investigated!”—“Carl, need it come to that?”—“Well, perhaps, it may be settled without your appearing in court. Before the case is investigated an attempt might be made to settle things amicably. You will have to admit having done wrong, pay the girl some small compensation, and there’s an end of it. Are you prepared to do this?”—“Yes,” I sighed.—“Don’t be down-hearted, Wilhelmine, and do not worry unnecessarily; but now, old wife, you must leave me, business is very brisk, and I have a good deal to attend to.”

Not to be down-hearted is easily enough prescribed but not so easily managed. Since that legal document entered our house, my life was nothing but trouble and anxiety; I felt as if a guillotine were perpetually hanging over my head, and I could hardly swallow my food. I could not get rid of the thought that Carl merely pretended to regard the matter lightly, so as to conceal the terrible truth from me. One afternoon, therefore, I went to Uncle Fritz, who is very far from being Carl’s equal in

kindness and consideration, and hence I hoped to learn the true state of affairs from him. When he had read the document, he said: "Wilhelmine, the case is ticklish. You abused the girl so, and she must feel pretty sure of her case, for she has as witnesses the two policemen who were present, also Herr Greve and his wife, and Dr. Wrenzchen."—"The Doctor against me?"—"It says so here. He can, of course, refuse to stand as a witness, being your son-in-law, but who can tell but that he may not choose to let slip a lovely opportunity of having his revenge, once in a way. You have had your fling at him often enough!"—"Fritz, do you really think him capable of such malice?"—"He might possibly be mollified if you were to promise for ever to renounce your guardianship over him as a mother-in-law."—"I will promise no such thing," I answered angrily; "now what I want you to tell me is whether you think it likely I shall lose the case."—"You may depend upon it, you will; for remember the policemen with their official oaths are against you." I had often heard of the danger of official oaths, and that if they were against one, one's case might be considered as good as lost. "Fritz," said I, "what am I to do? What can I do?"—"The one means of escape you had, you have unfortunately neglected."—"I will make up for it now, Fritz; only tell me what I can do. Most assuredly I will make up for

it now.”—“Well, you might maintain that you were drunk on the occasion, and plead extenuating circumstances.”

That was too much even for my patience. “Oh—you—you—cannibal!” I exclaimed, flaring up; “do you hold nothing in reverence, not even your own sister’s tribulation?”—“Come now, Wilhelmine, don’t go on like that. Probably they’ll let you off on some of the smaller points, and there’s little likelihood of your being sent to prison.”—“Carl quite expects the matter can be settled by accommodation, what do you think?”—“If your accuser had consulted a right sort of solicitor, possibly there might have been a reconciliation; but she seems to have got hold of a left-handed sort of individual; he will probably persuade her to carry matters to an extreme to suit his own purposes.”—“But how will the girl be able to pay the cost of it all.”—“The party that loses has to fork out; you’ll have to do that, my dear.”—“Oh, how mean, how shameful! To accuse me thus at my own expense. Is that justice?”—“The law precisely.”—“Then the law ought to be upturned. Fritz, I shall never survive this disgrace! My days are numbered!”—“Console yourself, Wilhelmine; every second respectable person has been punished once in his life. Cheer up!”

“Is that your advice too!” I exclaimed bitterly; “if you’ve nothing better to say, you may as well go

and get yourself embalmed! I spurn such advice as your 'cheer up!' " Winged with wrath, I left Uncle Fritz, and blamed myself for having exposed myself to being the wretched target of his taunts. Yet, when people lose their heads, they are apt to act senselessly.

Uncle Fritz proved right about the girl's having engaged a pettifogging lawyer; he was a regular cut-throatish, left-handed kind of individual, so that the attempt at accommodation ended in smoke.

A few days afterwards came another legal document, demanding my personal attendance at the Royal Magisterial Bench in Old Moabit, No. 11, 12, on Saturday at ten in the morning, Room 29. And even though I might have thought of running off somewhere, what would have been the use? The Court threatened, in case of an undefended non-attendance, to bring the person in by force; and rather than grant to my mortal enemy the sight of my being dragged in before the tribunal between two policemen, I resolved to appear of my own free will, although my nervous system had completely collapsed.

The upsets to my spirit were never ending. Heaven only knows how people came to know that a public action had been brought against me; among our own acquaintances, the one subject of conversation seemed to be the approaching trial.

“Much depends upon the judge,” said the Police-lieutenant’s wife, “and the way you represent the case. What are you going to wear?”—“Simple black,” I replied.—“The less showy the better, in order that the distinction between you and the plaintiff is not made to appear too great, and your higher social position is not considered an aggravating circumstance. The coat of arms you were having embroidered will not be of much use to you in the dock.”—“I never thought it would. When we keep our carriage I meant to have it painted on the door.”—“And I only meant to say that ancestors and emblems will not be of much use if you are found guilty; such disgrace sticks to one for ever.”—“We’ve not got that length, however,” I remarked.—“But you will surely admit that my husband knows something about such matters, and he said that the thunder-clap is as good as down upon you already. Yet we are above all prejudice, and I may add that I do not see any reason why we need give up our old intercourse with you.” In the eyes of the world, therefore, I was already condemned. I felt positive the Police-lieutenant’s wife would never again drive us out to the Grönwald. Henceforth I should be one of the outcasts of society.

This thought robbed me of all the sustaining power I had left. After this I could do nothing but creep about the house if I wanted exercise. I hadn’t

even the heart to sit at the window, for it seemed to me as if the passers by pointed at me with their fingers. Betti tried to persuade me that this was a delusion; but one day, with my own eyes, I saw Frau Heimreich walking up and down the other side of the street with her eldest girl, and casting spiteful glances up at our windows.

Frau Bergfeldt, too, paid me a visit; however, I cannot say that she cheered me up, rather the contrary.—“Good gracious, Frau Buchholz, to think of your having got into the frying pan! But why need you have struck about you so with the poker?”—“What sort of speech is that to me?” said I indignantly.—“Well, it’s said you belaboured the girl so, that a bloody head was the end of it. So you’ll certainly get six months.”—“There’s not a word about blows in the matter; how can you talk such rubbish?”—“I’m sorry for you, Frau Buchholz, but that’s what the whole town is saying; yet wherever I go I take your part, and say: ‘It’s a mercy the cook had a thick noddle, else they’d have had to drag Frau Buchholz on to the scaffold.’”—“You call that defending me?”—“Yes, I do; weren’t you always considerate to me . . . so it would really have grieved me were you to be put on the rack, or anything of that sort.”—“Good God, protect and defend me! I can swear I never raised a finger against that girl.”—“Frau Buchholz, don’t perjure yourself. How

could the report have got about, if there was no truth in it? Maybe the hand in which you held the poker slipped a bit; at all events, that's what I would say to the judge, if I had flown into the ditch as you have done."

"Frau Bergfeldt," I said in a weak voice, "I cannot bear any more of this kind of talk, I would rather be left alone."—"I'm in no hurry," she replied, and kept sitting there, and continued: "It's only at first that you'll feel it, afterwards people'll forget it; one has to forget things. Yet what's in a person the rain'll never wash off."—And in this style on she rattled. It was not till I was miserable both in body and mind that she went. "Betti," I said, with a last effort, "I'm not at home to any one after this, not even though the Great Mogul himself should come running up on hands and feet."

A real friend came, however, in the person of Frau Helbich, the keeper of the tavern where the Doctor and Uncle Fritz played skat, whom Frau Buchholz had once helped.

"I am positive," said Frau Helbich, "that you are innocent."—"That I am, Frau Helbich; but no one will believe me."—"I believe you," she replied briskly, "and that's the reason I have come here. I want to tell you that whatever may be said, the point about the dog is suspicious."—"It's of no use saying that; the lawyers sifted the whole matter

thoroughly.”—“Well, but every one knows that the first thing burglars do is to poison a watch dog.”—“That doesn’t tally, for the dog in the present case was a mere lap-dog.”—“That’s just it; watch dogs are outside the house, and might be got at; the dog at Dr. Wrenzchen’s was a lap-dog and was inside the house. Now, who gave it the poison? That can only have been done by some one in the house.”—“That doesn’t tally either, Frau Helbich, for the dog wasn’t poisoned, but throttled by having a string tied round its neck. You are mistaken.”—“One of our regular midday customers, a student, was positive about this. He said that if the poisoning could be proved, you would be acquitted.”—“Frau Helbich, I am much obliged to you for your sympathy, but the lawyers are likely to know more than a student and we others who haven’t experience in such things. Everything was, of course, thoroughly examined, and nothing was found.”—“And I had so firmly hoped to render you some assistance, Frau Buchholz; you cannot think how grieved I am for you.” With this she began to cry, and I cried too. Of all the attacks upon me this was the most affecting one; we both felt so utterly helpless. And the following day the case was to be examined. I was so downcast that I went to bed before it was dark. My Carl came and sat down beside me. He spoke very kindly, and said that I oughtn’t to make matters out

worse than they were; but then he hadn't had the many visits of condolence that I had had. "Try and get a good rest," he said, "and do not worry so. When the trial is over, you will quickly recover your old cheerful spirits. You look so snug and comfortable lying there, now do try and be happier."—"Carl," said I, "you surely don't want me to purr like an old tom cat? Even though I could, I wouldn't, in my present state of misery."

Betti came in and asked me if I cared to have anything to eat. "You might bring me a little milk and biscuit later, just enough to support life, but I'm in no hurry."

I had no appetite. Terrible thoughts seemed to have driven hunger away. In a kind of dose, I dreamed of prisons and executions, and although I tried to persuade myself that this was only the result of Frau Bergfeldt's chatter, as soon as I closed my eyes, the same horrors again rose up before me.

Carl came in to wish me good night, and Betti insisted upon my taking some food. To please her, I forced myself to take something, and found it tasted better than I had expected. The milk was freshly boiled, and the biscuits crisp. The child also brought me in a night-lamp, which she lighted, and after having kissed me, she too went away. Again I was alone.

Before me was the last night of my hitherto irre-

proachable life; henceforth I might never again be able to look any one straight in the face. And if I saw two persons nudging each other, and jeering, I should always suspect that it was about me. And if people should look at me rather doubtfully, might they not be quite right in doing so? Could I ever again condemn a fellow-creature without saying to myself, "You have yourself sat in the dock, and have had sentence passed upon you." Then a proverb crossed my mind, Heaven only knows where I had heard it: "Woe, woe to thee, Wilhelmine! the righteous will turn their faces from thee." Sleep was what I wanted; oh, how glad I should have been to get to sleep.

I lay first on one side, then on the other, and just as I fancied I was about to drop asleep, I became conscious that there were crumbs of biscuit in the bed, and my slightest movement made them irritate and annoy me. Every moment too, there seemed to be more, till the torture became unbearable, and there was nothing for it but to get out of my bed and remake it. This, I felt, did my spirits some good, but of sleep there was none to be got.

I lay and tumbled about as much as before. There! Wasn't that a crumb again? Yes, to be sure it was. A few must have got on to the mat in front of the bed, and stuck to my bare feet. And truly the whole lot of them seemed to have come

marching back again. I felt in despair, and cried in my vexation and helplessness. By what small means God can punish us—a single crumb of biscuit is enough! I knew that I had not always done what I ought to have done, but had I really deserved such terrible chastisement? It was long since I had folded my hands in prayer; now they found their way to each other of their own accord, and I humbly prayed for help. Then I crept out of bed a second time, and remade it with the utmost care. When I lay down again a gentle peacefulness seemed to have come over me, and sleep came with it.

Never had I even seen the law court in the Moabit district, and now I was actually to appear as a delinquent there myself. "Over yonder is the courtyard where the executions take place," said Uncle Fritz, pointing to a wall. I shuddered. But Fritz continued: "As long as Krauts keeps on his white gloves he's not dangerous; when, however, he begins to take them off . . ." Carl here forbade Fritz to talk in that manner, and gave me his arm. He asked for Room 29; we were shown the way, and at the end of a long corridor, we reached the antechamber. Some people were sitting there on benches, others were standing about. Herr Greve and his wife were there, also some policemen and Dr. Wrenzchen. And that wretch of a girl too I caught sight of, she who was the cause of all this worry and trouble.

The door of Room 29 was then opened, and a lawyer's clerk read out from some document the words: "*Ahrens versus Meier.*" Several persons who had been waiting went in, and after a short time came out again. They had come to terms at the last moment, fortunate people that they were! "*Band versus Buchholz*" was then called out. My brain was all in a whirl. I tottered forward, my limbs feeling as heavy as though I had been walking in dough, and more like a dead paddock than a human being. A small square place like a box was pointed out to me, and there I sat down upon a chair. This was the barricade to separate the accused person from the rest of the world.

At a raised table covered with green baize, sat the magistrate, his assessors, and the clerk of the law court. The latter read out the indictment. On the right sat the plaintiff, in the middle were the witnesses who had been called, and behind them sat the public, a barrier separating them from those taking part in the proceedings.

Everything that I was supposed to have said was then read out. And, oh! how offensive the words sounded in the mouth of a man who knew nothing about the matter and who hadn't even been present. And this I had to listen to! The magistrate, looking very solemn in his black gown, then said that the statements of the witnesses would have to be con-

firmed on oath, and after giving them an impressive exhortation, they were asked to retire. When they had left the room the magistrate addressed the plaintiff and me, and gave us to understand that it would be much the wiser plan for us to settle the matter quietly by accommodation, and asked if we would agree to this.

"Yes," I sighed.

"No," said the girl; she had her reputation as well as grander folks, and didn't mean to be trodden upon.

No such thing had been done, replied the magistrate, and moreover, what advantage would it be to her to persist in the punishment of a lady of irreproachable character? Frau Buchholz was willing to retract her words, and to bear the costs of the trial, whereby her honour would be perfectly satisfied.

The servant girl maintained that she would not agree to this. Frau Buchholz should be imprisoned and pay 3000 marks damages, that's what she demanded. The magistrate thereupon replied in a very severe tone of voice: "You have nothing whatever to demand."—Her solicitor had told her she had.—Then she must have employed a very strange kind of solicitor.—He knew as much and more than other lawyers.—That remains to be proved.

As there was thus no likelihood of any amicable settlement to the dispute, the proceedings com-

menced. Dr. Wrenzchen was called in as the first witness. The magistrate drew his attention to the fact that, as a relative of the defendant, he had a right to decline to stand as a witness. "What will he do?" thought I. "Will he take his revenge, and thus bring about an eternal breach between us?"

The Doctor said he should refrain from making any statement, but wished to express his surprise at the impudence of the plaintiff in claiming him as a witness on her side. This remark of the Doctor's seemed to me the greatest possible proof of nobility of soul, and never shall I forget it.

The magistrate then asked Herr Greve whether he had heard the defendant call the plaintiff a base deceiver on the evening in question. Herr Greve replied that he could not remember to have heard exactly those words. He was further asked whether he had heard the defendant say of the plaintiff that she was "a very Jezebel?" Herr Greve replied that he did remember this, it having struck him as strange that a lady of culture should have used such an expression, and he attributed it to her being in a state of great excitement.

"Mr. Magistrate and gentlemen, I can furnish a true statement of what happened, and beg you to hear what my witness has to say. That girl has always behaved in a rude and impertinent manner towards me." Uncle Fritz was then called. As he

came forward the abusive creature exclaimed: "That's a witness I won't have."—"The admissibility of a witness is determined by the court," said the presiding judge.—"I don't care, I won't agree to it. He once wanted to pinch my cheek, and I gave him a crack across his fingers for his impudence; since then he's been always against me."—"I hope no one will credit me with such bad taste," was Uncle Fritz's reply. The magistrate, however, requested him to be serious, and to keep to the point in question.

Uncle Fritz then stated that the plaintiff, without any obvious reason, had invariably acted in a reprehensible way towards the defendant. This had struck him whenever they had met at Dr. Wrenzchen's house. "What reason had the defendant given you for acting thus?" asked the magistrate.—"Well, I can't bear any one coming peering into my pans when I'm cooking," was her reply.

"Of course not!" I exclaimed; "you didn't want an experienced housewife noticing how her daughter was being taken in at every turn and corner! How was it that, notwithstanding their simple life, their expenses were so enormously high, in spite of my daughter keeping an exact account of her outlays? Dr. Wrenzchen was himself becoming suspicious. Her object, Mr. Magistrate, was probably to frighten me out of the house, in order that she

might prey upon an inexperienced housewife, and that, too, was probably her reason for making the fuss about the craw-fish.”—“That’s a new insult to be added to the list,” the servant girl called out in a loud voice. Dr. Wrenzchen, however, supported my statement.

The most ticklish point in the case was, however, still to come. The magistrate observed: there seems to have been provocation for the alleged insulting speeches, but the defendant’s assertion that the plaintiff made common cause with the burglars, might be likely seriously to injure the plaintiff’s prospects in life.

The policemen were then examined, and stated that I had certainly declared that the provisions had been purchased specially with a view to the robbers, and also that I had undoubtedly maintained that the plaintiff had had a hand in the matter. This they affirmed on oath, as did also Herr Greve and his wife.

A buzzing sound seemed to fill my head. I felt as if the floor of the room had suddenly become aslant, and that I should not be able to prevent myself slipping down. Nervously, I clutched hold of the chair, as I saw the magistrate rise and say to his colleagues, “You will agree, I think, that some mild form of punishment is all that is necessary.”

In the vain hope that some assistance might yet

be forthcoming, my eyes wandered anxiously round the room; and I caught sight of one face upon which all the compassion in the world seemed to be concentrated, and tearful eyes that looked at me in a dumb but beseeching way. I understood the beseeching look of plump little Frau Helbich, and, as if by some inspiration, I rose up and said aloud, "Mr. Magistrate and gentlemen, I should like to ask my accuser one more question, let her confess why she poisoned the dog."

A pin might have been heard fall, the silence was so great. The servant girl changed colour, and seemed to lose her self-possession. "I never could endure the animal," she burst out. "So you admit having poisoned the dog?" said the magistrate, giving her a penetrating look. "It was simply to provoke me that they called the creature Maffi Pamph, because my name was Marie Band."—"And was that sufficient reason for your despatching the animal?"—"I couldn't stand the name any longer."—"Mr. Magistrate," I interposed, "Maffi is merely an abbreviation of Möppel, and Uncle Fritz added the name Pamph."—"Really," exclaimed the girl, casting a malicious glance at me, "there's no one here likely to believe that!"—"But it's true," I replied; "everything that's soft and for petting begins with an 'M,' surely no one would ever think of taking a crocodile or a rattlesnake on to their lap to stroke

and fondle, and call either of them 'My mousie,' or 'my minikin.' ” The magistrate interrupted me by saying, “I must ask you not to wander from the point. I understand you had absolutely no intention of annoying the plaintiff by giving the little dog the name of Maffi Pamph?”

“Goodness me, of course not! We never meant anybody by that name. That’s a mere shuffling excuse of the girl’s. The dog barked at every one in a horrid way; Herr Greve can tell you that, and it was very necessary on the evening of the robbery that it should be quiet, else Herr Greve might have come down, alarmed by the noise, and have surprised the burglars. Moreover, the dog would never let her touch it, so that she must have put the poison in its food.”—“That’s a downright lie!” exclaimed the girl. “You have, however, already half admitted having given the animal poison,” said the magistrate, turning to the plaintiff; “it would be well for you to tell us the whole truth. Your denying matters will not help you; science has means of proving whether the dog was poisoned or not.”—“Well then, I did give it a powder to be rid of it.”

“And where did you get the powder?”—“From an apothecary.”—“Which apothecary?”—“I don’t remember now.”—“Try and recollect, it would be strange if you had forgotten that.”—“I didn’t fetch it myself.”—“Who was it did you the favour to

fetch it?"—"An acquaintance."—"What was the name of this acquaintance of yours?"—"It was a man I didn't know, I asked him."—"Again one of the great unknown!" said the magistrate, and thereupon made a sign to the clerk, and whispered some words into his ear. The clerk left the room and returned with a policeman. The magistrate rose and said, "There are grave reasons for thinking that the plaintiff, Marie Band, spinster, was implicated in the robbery at the house of Dr. Wrenzchen, she must be placed under arrest, and the case enquired into again. The private charge against Frau Buchholz may be considered as withdrawn."

Marie Band had to follow the policeman and be put in prison—I was free.

We left Room 29, to make way for others. It is to be hoped that this is the first and last time I shall ever have to enter it. But should it happen that I have again to attend, I shall be able to assume a very different tone, for I have now become quite familiar with legal phraseology.

When we got outside and could breathe freely again, as if some great danger had been evaded, little Frau Helbich came waddling up to me, offering her heartfelt congratulations. "Frau Helbich," said I, "you have a very penetrating insight into things; what would have become of me had you not been in Court?"—"All happened as it was ordained," she

replied; "our heavenly Father rendered you assistance, He put all things right in His own good time." I pressed her hand, and said: "And you were the Seraphin sent to help me!" We understood each other.

A few days afterwards I received another legal document announcing that the private charge against me was withdrawn.

The girl had been induced to make a full confession. Maffi Pamph was sent, like any human being, in a sealed box to a chemist, who turned him inside out, and found an inconceivable amount of poison in him, which the greedy creature must have consumed. The rope round its neck was a case of mere sham fighting, as was also the girl's being tied hand and foot and gagged. It also came out that the accomplice had, at first, addressed the girl as a lover, and that she had entrapped him partly by love and partly by stolen goods. Of course if she had not been thievishly inclined by nature, she would never have acted thus. I had always maintained that she was a good-for-nothing, and Maffi had evidently thought the same. . . .

CHAPTER XXV

FRAU BUCHHOLZ HAS TO VISIT CARLSBAD FOR HER
HEALTH AND WHILE THERE SHE RE-
CEIVES TREMENDOUS NEWS

THERE was no use fighting against it or trying to deceive myself; the experiences of the past weeks had completely damped my spirits, and however great an effort I might make to smile—like the jaws exhibited in dentist's windows—my temper became daily more and more disagreeable, and my complexion yellowish-grey in colour. After the trial I had most firmly resolved that in future I would always be most gentle and submissive towards Carl, but I found it absolutely impossible to control my irritable nature; and so I made his life as well as Betti's miserable, without really wishing to do so. A fly on the wall would annoy me, and I would scold them both for it. Frau Helbich one day brought me a small bottle of home-made Swedish essence of life, but it upset my stomach, and I took a perfect dislike to it. In fact I was ill.

When matters had become so bad that they could scarcely have been worse, I, at last, did what Carl had wanted me to do at the outset, and agreed to consult Dr. Wrenzchen. "He was so extremely considerate towards you at the time of the trial," said Carl, "that I am sure you can place full confidence in him." But I was myself afraid that the doctor might prescribe me some medicine to harm me. My mind had become so darkened. At last, however, he had to be called in.

The doctor examined me very carefully, and then said that the only thing that would restore me to health was a prolonged stay at Carlsbad and use of the waters. "No, no," was my reply, "I'll not submit to be sent so far off as that. What will become of things here, if I am away?"—"You can leave us here with a perfectly easy mind, and the sooner you start the better," replied the doctor.—"So that I may be out of your way, I suppose!"—"In order that your complaint may not become chronic."—"But what if Emmi should require her mother?"—"If you want to get well for your own and for your children's sake, follow my orders; as your son-in-law I will consider you as far as possible; as your medical man, however, I have no consideration, and must ask you to obey me. Either you go off to Carlsbad in a few days, or I send you a notary that you may make your will."

Those words of his had effect. The necessary preparations were soon made, and after a miserably sad "good-bye," Betti and I got into the train. How could I know whether I might not be hurrying straight into the jaws of death, in place of to Carlsbad.

Betti had at once determined to accompany me, and put up with my unintentional ill-humour in the most forbearing way. She had, indeed, become perfectly changed since sorrow had entered into her life. Formerly there had always been slamming of doors, and tossing back of heads if anything was not to her liking; now she went about so quietly one scarcely heard her, and was all loving devotion. I had had sorrow enough myself; but in my case it had all turned to gall and bitterness. I wondered whether Carlsbad would prove of any use to me! I doubted it.

While at Carlsbad the Buchholzes made a few friends, chief of them Papa Michaelson, an old habitu .

One morning when we were sitting peaceably at Pupp's having our coffee, Betti with hers quite of the wrong sort, more than half milk, we two old people with the right sort as prescribed, with no more cream than sensible folks have ever been in the habit of taking since the days of Adam—all of a sudden up comes a telegraph boy with a message

for me; he was accompanied by the maidservant from our lodgings, so as to make sure of finding me. I opened the envelope and read:

“A healthy boy, brown eyes, exactly like his father. Is to be called Franz. Mother doing extremely well.
WRENZCHEN.”

This news came most unexpectedly. Papa Michaelson congratulated me very heartily, and at once gave Betti her new title of Auntie. However, I could not join in any such merriment, for I kept thinking who there was to superintend matters if I was not there. A further surprise awaited me, however. Scarcely half an hour later a second telegram was put into my hands, with the words:

“A healthy boy, blue eyes, exactly like his mother, is to be called Fritz. The father as well as can be expected!
WRENZCHEN.”

“Herr Michaelsen,” said I, “I do not know whether my reason has been affected by the use of the waters, or what can have happened. First I’m told it’s a boy with brown eyes, and now suddenly it’s said they’re blue.”

“It does sometimes happen that eyes differ in colour,” said Papa Michaelsen learnedly; “and according to Darwin it is a case of atavism, but the short space of time in which it has occurred in your grand-

son's case renders it a matter of extreme interest. It will certainly have to be reported to one of our scientific periodicals."

"But why should the child first be called Franz and then Fritz? At first it's said to be like the father, and then like the mother! This is surely a human impossibility."

Papa Michaelsen gave me a very sly look across the top of his spectacles and said: "What if there should be two?"

"Two!" I exclaimed, "when they're only prepared for one. No, that's nonsense! But I seem to understand it now; those words, 'the father is as well as can be expected,' are Uncle Fritz's and nobody else's; all I can say is that such jokes are not very likely to assist my cure."

Next day, however, there came a letter from Carl, announcing the arrival of the twins. He said Uncle Fritz had, no doubt, sent me a telegram, and told me that the children were to be called Franz and Fritz. Dr. Wrenzchen had no time to telegraph himself, and had begged Uncle Fritz to send a message. Emmi was doing very well and was supremely happy.

Franz and Fritz! The names were not at all to my liking. The one might, of course, be called Franz after the Doctor, but would it not have been much better to have called the second Wilhelm, in

honour of the Emperor as well as of myself? A nice family ours will become with a number of persons with the same name. It will end in their having all to be called by their full names, else there will be a perpetual confusion. I could perfectly well foresee the muddle there would be in days to come.

Carl's letter had a postscript. "Franz was born during the last hour of the last day in May: Fritz during the first hour of the first day in June. What do you say to that?"

"That, of course, it's natural enough there should be endless stupidity when I'm not by to see to things myself," I exclaimed excitedly. "The poor children! Not a soul will take them to be twins when their birthdays come to be celebrated one in May and the other in June. And then to think of their names, Franz and Fritz. They might as well have been called *Max and Moritz*."

"Herr Michaelsen," said I, "we must be off home at once; I cannot be spared a moment longer from Berlin. If I delay I shouldn't wonder if the Brandenburg Gate were moved from its place, such unheard of things are going on there."

"Is the river Spree on fire, then?"

"If it were no more than that! But only think, my son-in-law has absolutely got no one to keep an eye upon him!"

Our return home was a most joyful one, and when

I pressed my first kiss on the little foreheads of my two baby grandsons, truly everything did seem to me perfectly as it should be; for, after all, the two little creatures could not be made responsible for their father, and he, too, moreover, will henceforth have to play a subordinate part, as everything naturally will have to turn upon the children. I at once took my post at the Doctor's house, during the day-time. He objected to this at first, but I asked him: "Do you mean to kill your wife and babes?" That made him give in. And how well he was cared for himself, now that I could look after things in the kitchen without fear of the cook. After a week's time he regularly beamed on me.

Emmi recovered day by day. And under my superintendence she got only what was good for her and strengthened her. If ever there was a Cerberus, it was me during those days in and out of my daughter's room. One thing that did displease me was that, in place of having cradles, little immovable bedsteads had been ordered. Emmi told me Franz had said that rocking was not considered hygienic, and apt to make children stupid. "Wasn't he himself brought up in the old fashion," said I, "and he's come to be a doctor! Well, maybe, if it hadn't been for the rocking he got as an infant, he'd long since have been a member of the Medical Council."

Many a time I wished for a cradle, especially for

little Franz, who was of a crying disposition, and Grandmamma Buchholz had to carry him about in her arms till he was quiet. I told the Doctor that such fits of crying had never occurred in our family, and that the bad habit must have been transmitted from his side. His reply was: "Dear mother-in-law, it's only external."

Of an evening Carl or Uncle Fritz would come and fetch me, and at the same time enquire how things were progressing. On the Thursday evening Dr. Wrenzchen did not go out, much to my surprise. Something did, it is true, seem amiss with him all day long, and as evening approached I could distinctly see how much the usual evening gathering seemed to be upon his mind.

Towards 8 o'clock Dr. Paber called to ask him whether they might expect him at the Medical Society later? I begged Dr. Paber to remain with us to supper, saying that I would send the servant round with a message, and that Dr. Wrenzchen would so enjoy a quiet talk with him here. Dr. Paber agreed to remain, and as there was cold roast veal, I prepared an extra good salad of meat with mayonnaise and capers, and decorated it with sliced radishes and not too much gherkin; they thought it delicious. When supper was over I had a large jug of special brew fetched, and my son-in-law thereupon said, "If we could have a game of *skat* here, I

wouldn't change places with a king!" Dr. Paber looked at me and said kindly: "How would it be for you to try a hand for once, dear Frau Buchholz?"—"What! I play *skat*?" I exclaimed. "You must know something about this entertaining game, from having watched others play it," continued Dr. Paber. "Come, dear mother-in-law, don't be a silly," said the Doctor. "I do not think I have any talent for card-playing," said I. But the Doctor had already fetched the boards, and the two gentlemen commenced to teach me the rules with great patience, without, however, letting me into the secret of some of the best moves, as I found out afterwards, when Uncle Fritz appeared and he sat down beside me and helped me. And actually I won the game. Dr. Paber declared he had never seen a lady with more natural talent for *skat*.

So there I sat with the three gentlemen who gave themselves every conceivable trouble to lead another fellow-creature astray into the vice of card-playing; and, as I must unfortunately admit, they succeeded very well, for it was nearly midnight before we had finished. My gains I divided into two portions, one for Franz and the other for Fritz. I had become somewhat reconciled to the name Fritz, when Dr. Wrenzen assured me that their first daughter should be called Wilhelmine. He knows how fond I am of acting as godmother.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH BETTI COMES WITHIN SIGHT OF HAPPINESS ONCE MORE, AND CARL AGAIN IS GUILTY OF RETICENCE

News of Herr Schmidt now arrives. A visit from Herr Max clears up the mystery. It seems that Herr Schmidt had been unfortunately involved with a girl—the girl of the red paper cap, who had played the harpy. It was to avoid her that he had left Berlin. Now, however, she had married an artizan, and Felix felt himself free, with Frau Buchholz's consent, to make those advances to Betti which he had always longed for but could not honourably make while he was compromised. So far Herr Max.

I SAID nothing. Could I declare him free from blame? No. And yet I felt he had not acted dishonourably towards us. He did not press himself upon us; it was I that encouraged him; he had never spoken to Betti of love, had never promised her any-

thing, or asked any promise from her. Of that I was convinced. And yet in both their hearts there had quietly and secretly bloomed hopes that had as secretly and quietly withered—destroyed by the levity of Sunday amusements.

“Has Felix acted so very badly, that you have no word of pardon for him?” asked Herr Max.—“Of what good would my pardon be to him?” I replied.—“It would be everything to him, it would enable him to hope that he might again present himself at your house.”—“It is too late now, Betti has resigned herself to her fate, and lost love is not apt to return.”

Herr Max rose hurriedly: “I cannot and will not tell him that,” he said excitedly; “he hopes for a kind message. He must have it.”—Herr Max spoke so warmly and feelingly for his friend that I could not but be affected myself, and therefore said: “I cannot decide this matter alone, others have a word to say as well,” and with this I rang the bell, and sent Doris down to Carl, who was in the office, to ask him to come up to me. He came at once, and when he saw Herr Max, greeted him in a very friendly manner, and said: “Well, and how do matters stand now, my young friend?”—“The marriage took place the day before yesterday,” was his answer.—“Now, Carl, how’s this?” I exclaimed, astonished; “how is it that you know about all this?”

—“Herr Felix Schmidt was honest enough to tell me the circumstances that compelled him to leave Berlin; and I could only approve of his actions.”—“And me—you have kept all this from me? Carl, I do think . . .”—“Now, Wilhelmine, do me the favour and look up at your portrait for a minute? Why should you have been worried about the matter unnecessarily? I myself had begun to doubt whether things could ever come right, and therefore considered it better not to recall the past. The question now is whether Betti has forgotten him or not?”—“She doesn’t seem to think of him at all!”—“Yet it may only seem so,” interposed Herr Max. “Well, I will try and find out; still, I do not think there will be much use now; as soon as she hears all the particulars, she will draw back. She has her pride.” Whereupon my Carl replied: “When the time comes, he will tell her all himself. We have no right to abuse the confidence he has placed in us. He has repented and atoned for his folly, by having had to conceal his love for her. Can you ask more? He who is without sin let him cast the first stone!”—“Carl, I hope you’ll be able to cast the stone yourself.” He laughed, and said: “My wife has already given in, I see; come and fetch your answer to-morrow, Herr Max.”—“Do not come yourself, that might strike Betti as peculiar,” I urged; “if things look promising, I will put this red hyacinth

on the ledge between the windows.”—“Thank you,” replied Herr Max; “I will pass your house the first thing in the morning, and will look up.” Thereupon he took leave of us and went away. I could not help thinking that any one who had so devoted a friend could not possibly be a bad man. If only youth were not so overflowing with spirit and thoughtlessness! Yet, perhaps, were it not so, that little boy would be lying dead in his grave.

I could not help letting Carl know a little what I thought of his egotistical silence, but my words seemed as good as thrown away upon him, the future seemed all so rosy-coloured to him now. He wanted to have Felix Schmidt as a partner, and would not think of anything else. “I should have such a support in him, Minchen, for he understands the manufactures. Away in Saxony, where he now is, they want him to become a partner.”—“How do you know that?”—“The firm applied to me about him, as he had referred them to me.”—“And what did you say?”—“First and foremost, that he was an upright man, and that I should place full confidence in him myself.”

After supper, Carl went out a little for a glass of beer, and I waited for Betti, who came in at the usual hour. [*Betti, I should say, had been trying her hand at writing and had been to see Amanda Kullecke, to read something to her.*] Amanda had said

to her: "Betti, a story must have something about love in it, no matter whether it ends happily or unhappily, but of love there must be something."—"Well, Betti, won't you try?" said I, by way of reconnoitring, and I felt my heart beginning to beat faster.—"Am I to write about happiness and love with tears in my own eyes, Mamma?" she replied sorrowfully.—"You might," I added, continuing my own train of thought, while my heart beat faster and faster; "you might describe two young people loving one another without acknowledging it; make the lover go far away to earn a livelihood, or something of the sort, meaning to return when he had made enough, but finds then that the girl has meanwhile forgotten him."

"Forgotten him!" exclaimed Betti, looking at me in astonishment; "then she could never have really loved him."

"Then do you love him still? And do you know why he went away?" I blurted out thoughtlessly. At that moment a stroke of apoplexy would have done me good, for I felt sure that Betti would be upset. However, she remained quite composed, and said, in a scarcely audible voice:

"Perhaps he thought me unworthy of further notice."

My hands were clutching tightly hold of the sofa, for, indeed, I needed support; gradually I loosened

my hold, and drew a breath. "Betti," I said, "be good enough to put that red hyacinth in between the windows, its scent is too strong for me."

Betti did as I asked her; and now I knew that she would forget and forgive, whatever she might hear, and I also saw how right Carl had been in keeping the matter quiet, for how easily one finds oneself off at a gallop.

Of the result of the visit of Herr Max we are not told at the time; but we learn it later when Betti, apparently on the inspiration of the moment, but really as part of a deep-laid scheme, is asked if she would like to go for a little jaunt.

"What do you say, Betti," I inquired, "to our going out to Tegel again?"—"Tegel!" she replied in a curious tone of voice,—“oh, yes, if you like.”

If I liked! Why, Carl and I had long since settled our plan, which was now about to be carried out. The plan was my idea; Carl it was who had to see that it was carried out properly to the minute.

It was afternoon. We had been sitting in the woods where there was a view across the lake, and as I had long since determined some day to have a picnic at this point, a hamper with good things was provided. Betti was rather monosyllabic; perhaps she was thinking how happy we had all once been in these woods, which we were to-day trying to enjoy again.

My husband was rather quiet too, for he knew what was about to occur within the next quarter of an hour, and did not feel quite sure how things would go. I, on the other hand, had no doubts whatever, or why should I have chosen Tegel? The Present was to be linked with the Past; what lay between was a winter's day. Where are frost and snow, when the hawthorn blooms again? Forgotten!

Carl kept taking out his watch, and looked anxiously out on to the lake; then we both saw a boat leave the opposite shore and steer straight across towards the woods where we were sitting. "I wonder if those people are coming to us?" said I, as if I knew something. "It looks like it," said Carl. "You know," he added, "how much I am in want of a partner; the business requires increased support." The boat was coming nearer. "I have found some one in whom I place full confidence, but I wanted to know whether he pleased you both as well." With this he looked at Betti. "My decision will depend upon your judgment. This was my reason for asking him to join us here to-day. Here he is."

The boat came flying onwards, rowed by powerful arms, and at last shot up on to the beach. Betti had jumped up, and stood immovable; she had recognised the two men in the boat, Felix and Max—the two friends.

With quick and elastic steps Herr Felix hurried up to Betti, stretching both hands out towards her, and she, as if in a dream, laid hers in his. "Ah, ha! it's to be 'Buchholz and Son,' after all," said I in a whisper to Carl. He only smiled.

CHAPTER XXVII

FRITZ AND FRANZ PLAY WITH MARBLES, AND ARITHMETIC LEADS TO CASTOR OIL

Here this book might end; for the sequel which Stinde began a year or so after is far from being equal to its predecessors. It is also more elaborate, for, having both her daughters off her hands, Frau Buchholz had to be provided with other foils, and she is therefore shown as taking as "helps" two girls who, in return for the benefits to be derived from the Frau's refined society, give their services in the house. It need hardly be said that this arrangement fails to run smoothly. Other new characters are Herr Max's fiancée and the twins. Since the twins are Emmi's and Dr. Wrenzchen's, and are therefore in the direct line, I quote here the description of the luckless afternoon on which Herr Kleines gave them some marbles to play with.

IT cannot be denied that scarcely anything could be sweeter than the twins when they are being put to bed, the pure, tiny Raphaels, with their sweet

fat little arms and legs, and dimples on their necks that one longs to bite into. It is impossible to kiss them enough, and Amanda Kulecke, who is so fond of seeing them in nature's garb, says that they are real little Cupids. And they know very well that people are fond of them, and shriek with delight when Granny takes them and hugs them one at a time, which is the only way to manage when there are a pair of brothers.

But for all that, I prophesied from the very beginning that twins, however charming, would entail a good deal of trouble, were it only for the bother with the perambulator, in which there is room for half a squadron, and which the strength of one person is insufficient to get downstairs. But it was the Doctor who gave such a clumsy order, and we ladies might slave away at it, for the nurse was far too high and mighty to help with it. Oh, dear, no! she had to be attended to all round like a sea-monster; no dinner was good enough for her—she demanded a double portion of butter and sandwiches for her lunch! Emmi and I sang a *Te Deum* for joy when she evaporated back to the Spreewald to recruit for her next situation. One really felt free again in one's own house.

The Doctor had, as usual, opposed a deaf ear to all my complaints, though the woman grew more presuming day by day. He even forbade our taking

any measures against her, for fear of her anger taking effect on the children. But had *he* to put up with her the livelong day? He goes off to his patients, and does not enjoy the domestic worries with us. Under such circumstances, there is no art in playing the father.

Since the children made their appearance in this life, he has become very sparing in the matter of large parties, with the exception naturally of the christening, for which I composed the *menu*, on this occasion only; but I fear that it was too grand for him, and he now wishes to return to simplicity in the matter of expenses, for indeed he generally gets enthusiastic about what is beautiful and costs little. It can hardly be considered a sign of culture when he says that large parties are nothing but lady-shows. But doctors do allow themselves to have prejudices sometimes. If one has acquired a family, outside circles ought not to be neglected. Some festivities should take place from time to time. What are the neighbours likely to say if they never notice illuminated windows? Why surely, "Poverty and pride rule on the Doctor's floor!"

And further, ought *we* not to have a care that family circles are provided for the growing children, where they will be invited and find companions such as young ladies when they have arrived at the age of adolescence?

Herr Kleines has the habit of paying his formal calls on Sunday afternoons, and playing with the children, on which occasions he is given to hopping about like a crow, and making faces in his endeavours to amuse them. However, his success is mostly doubtful; indeed, energetically as he moves his scalp up and down and waggles his ears, we have experienced the fact that Franz has yelled till he had to be taken away, and was only restored to equanimity by laborious patting on his back. This is a particularly rare gift of nature; but of what avail is such a gift, when it appears to the children in their nightly dreams, causes them to shriek horribly, and was only given up after he had been forbidden to wear out his powers? Also when he first came, he used to bring a number of toys as presents, which led him into unnecessary expense, as there always had to be duplicates. My son-in-law's hospitality does not afford a sufficient return for such extravagance, and one does not care about taking presents from a person whose salary, though fixed, is by no means too ample. Notwithstanding the toys, the children displayed an invincible dislike to him, which may have arisen from the fact that they had not developed sufficient intelligence to appreciate the hygienic objects warranted proof against licking, and manufactured according to the dictates of the Imperial Office of Hygiene; and when he made them a present of

marbles painted with a colour free of arsenic, let us hope that he himself had no idea of how dangerous marbles themselves are, nor how sternly they should be forbidden as opposed to the laws of sanitation.

The following is what happened:

Herr Kleines brings his marbles with him, and being a cheap luxury, he is allowed to bestow them on the children. He proceeds to count them over himself: six for Franz, and six for Fritz, and everything is in the most splendid order as he gives them to them. The little folk amuse themselves capitally with the rolling balls, and Franz abstains from screaming, and Fritz from scratching and biting Herr Kleines, as usual, and there is nothing but laughter and jubilation.

After Herr Kleines had left, and the children did not want to play at marbles any longer, I gathered the things up. "I say, Emmi, were there not twelve marbles?" I asked.—"Yes," she answered; "he gave six to Franz, and six to Fritz—that makes twelve together."—"But there are only eleven here."—"Quite enough, too," said Emmi."—"I am not thinking about that," I answered; "but where is the one marble?"—"Lost," laughed Emmi at my anxiety.—"I know that, but the question is, where is it? I only hope that no one has swallowed it."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Emmi, in a desperate state of fright. "That ball must be found. Let

us look for it, mamma.”—“Where is the nurse?”—
 “Gone out.”—“Then we must set to work.”

So the two of us began the search; on the carpet, under the carpet, under the furniture, upon the furniture, in the ante-room, on the window-sill, we lifted the children up, put them down again, turned back the carpet again, lifted the children once more, searched once more in every corner, turned up the carpet once more. No marble was to be found.

“One of them has swallowed it,” said Emmi, in fearful conviction.

“But which?” I asked. “Franz or Fritz?”

“How am I to know? If only my husband were here; and it may be a full hour before he comes! What are we to do until then? Shall we give the child a hot drink?”

“Which of them?” I asked energetically, the better to recall her to presence of mind, for her composure was visibly failing. “Do you know which? I imagine it is Franz.”

“Fritz, beyond doubt. He puts everything into his mouth.”

“Excuse me, Fritz takes more after us Buchholzes, and I am not aware that, even in our earliest youth, any one of our family was distinguished by greediness and gluttony; no, if either of them has swallowed it, it must be Franz.”

Emmi examined the children with anxious scru-

tiny: "Don't you find too that Franz is looking quite pale already? Oh, Heavens, if he should die! Where can my husband be?" She put her forefinger into the child's mouth and rummaged round and round it, as if the ball were likely to be sticking there still; but without any result, except the natural one that the boy yelled lustily.

"How awfully he must be suffering! That abominable Herr Kleines! What business had he to bring the children those stupid marbles? He must know that they are just the sort of things for them to put into their mouths. He shall have the pleasure of hearing a piece of my mind! Try to be quiet, my precious Franz; you will soon be better; papa will cure his little boy; he will find out directly where the marble has gone. Oh, dear, I hope he won't have to use the knife!"

"Emmi," I said, "don't talk yourself into an unnecessary state of grief and excitement. Do wait till you know more, so that, should it be required, you may have strength to keep your head clear in the event of the worse. Imaginary dangers are no dangers—they are merely a form of self-torture——"

"Really?" she interrupted me; "then perhaps the marble does not constitute a danger? According to that, I suppose the child would need to have swallowed a nine-pin in order to arouse your sympathy!"

"Emmi!"

"Well, yes," she remarked, with symptoms of yielding. "Here I sit in terrible trouble, and you worry me with your moral lessons! Oh, mamma, where can Franz be stopping? Don't you see that the child is getting weaker from minute to minute?"

"That is the result of his bellowing."

"Oh, my precious child, my sweet little Franz, don't cry like that!" she now began. "Do be a good boy again!" and she rocked him backwards and forwards in her arms. According to my ideas, the child was simply made unmanageable by this exceptional overflow of tenderness, and determined not to give in.

"Emmi," I remarked, as dispassionately as possible, "under existing circumstances I should not rock the child so violently, if I were in your place. The marble might easily be jerked lower down, and harden there afterwards."

She stared at me in horror, just as I have seen a girl do who was acting Ophelia at the play-house, when she went mad.

"Do you think so?" she shrieked. "Then there is no longer hope? Franz had a similar case the other day, where a lead soldier had been swallowed. The boy had to die. Oh, my Franz, my precious Franz!"

The Doctor arrived now, and relieved the tension of the situation. Emmi screamed at him like a lunatic: "Save your son!" and sent a perceptible thrill

through him. It was not until after I had explained to him how the marbles had come into the house, and what a fool Herr Kleines was, that the doctor took the upper hand of the father, and he began to examine Franz, which amused the little scamp vastly. After a pause, he said: "The boy is as well as ever; what are you making such a fuss about?"—"Possibly Fritz has got it," sobbed Emmi.

"Or neither of them," said the Doctor.

"One of them must have swallowed it," I answered; "for the ball has vanished from the earth without leaving a trace."—"If it is only properly looked for it is sure to be found," spoke the Doctor.—"We have turned everything topsy-turvy already."—"Women are never thorough," he grumbled, and set to work to unearth the marble.

I had no time to answer him with the want of consideration that he deserved, as the rolling back of the carpet, frantic grabs behind the furniture, and turning out of corners began afresh—in a word, the whole bother over again. At last he counted the marbles over once more; but the full dozen could not be made up for all his endeavours.—"Eleven remain eleven," I said angrily.

The Doctor scratched the back of his head: "The marble has disappeared."

"We knew as much as that long ago," I gave him

to understand, "although we 'women' do not possess thoroughness. No, positively not a scrap."

"Can Pitti have carried it off?" he asked.—"The dog never showed his nose in the room."—"Then something must be done," he said; "but keep quiet, Emmi; it is a matter of no importance. Franz must be given a tablespoonful of salad oil, to be followed by a prescription which I will write out."

"And how about Fritz?" I interposed.

"What is the matter with Fritz?"

"Are you so certain as to which has swallowed the marble?"

"Both boys to have the same treatment," decided the Doctor shortly. "The marble must be found."

"Now one innocent creature is obliged to suffer for the sake of the other," I remarked, my humanitarian proclivities being somewhat hurt. "I consider that it is simply inexcusable!"

"It is inexcusable that the children were not better looked after!" he scolded. "If they had been with the nurse, it would certainly not have happened."

This reproach roused my ire. "My worthy son-in-law," I therefore answered in measured tones, "the nurse was a horror. The responsibility does not rest upon us. I said at once that there would be terrible confusion; and matters can hardly be worse than they are at present. If the blame is to rest upon any

one, it must be upon you, for there have never been twins in our family."

And what was the answer he made to this with jeering laughter, instead of being reduced to abject silence? "I am sorry for that—the race is good."

The only possible answer to this was to turn away in wounded disgust.

When I got home I found my good Carl in the middle of a pleasant game of skat, the players being himself, Herr Felix and Herr Kleines, whom he had met out walking and taken back home for this purpose.

"Was there anything wrong at the Doctor's, that you had to send a messenger?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I exclaimed, and, letting fly at Herr Kleines, "you are the cause! How could you be so unreasonable as to bring toys to the children which may cause them to lose their health?"—"I do not understand you," he answered, trying to smile down my indignation.—"You never do seem to comprehend when you do mischief, and consider yourself diabolically clever into the bargain to practise such sleight-of-hand as you did with the marbles."—"But, excuse me, surely the children are not able to count as yet."—"How so? What do you mean by that?"—"Well, two into eleven won't go." Do you mean to jeer at me?"—"Certainly not. I only had eleven marbles, and in order not to spoil the

symmetry of the thing, I said to Franz, 'Here are six,' and just the same to Fritz."—"Then Fritz only had five?"—"That's it! I did a bit of conjuring."—"Thank God!" I exclaimed; "and we thought that he had swallowed one. As for you, Herr Kleines, make your way as quickly as may be to the Doctor's, so that my daughter may be relieved of her cares. It is all through you that the poor little sons have had to take such horrid stuff."—"But surely it was only Fritz?" said my husband.

Herr Kleines showed himself from his most agreeable side, which on this occasion was the invisible one; indeed he probably recognised that a messenger of peace could never arrive too early.

Betti made me a cup of tea and a sandwich, of which I stood in need, and did all in her power to quiet my nerves again, so that I gradually found myself capable of relating the events. They were all glad that it had been a false alarm, and now that all was quiet again, I felt with absolute clearness how completely the two little ones had grown into one's heart; for while I was at Emmi's I had to take the matter with apparent ease, as a kind of set-off to her despondency. No; rather let us have a pair of twins than lose one of them, even though Grandmamma Buchholz must work till she drops.

"Well," I said, "a few more rounds will be a good antidote for our fright. I can tell you that it is no

easy matter to nurse one child through such an illness, let alone two. But I do feel confidence in our doctor—he knows what he is about.”

My husband declared a solo in clubs straight off, but as I held two knaves and five trumps against him, he was bound to lose. That was a bright spot of light after the troubles of the day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SHOWING HOW FRAU BUCHHOLZ MEETS AN EARLY
ADMIRER AND HOW SYMPATHY FROM THE
WRONG PERSON IS ONLY AN INSULT

The early lover's name was Herr Briese and he manufactured mustard. An excursion to the Hasenhaide, a fair on the outskirts of Berlin, had been planned, largely to see the balloon, and Herr Briese arrived in time to join it.

HERR BRIESE'S advent interrupted a direct refusal. At first sight I could not find a place for him in my memory; but as his loaf-like pate was still the same, the intervening years vanished like window-shutters, and I remembered with dreadful exactitude the day upon which he flattered himself that I was going to make him happy. He sent a letter like copper-plate, and got a carefully-worded refusal from my father by return, in which no objection was made to himself personally, stress being

rather laid on the very ungrown-up juvenility of the desired one. He wrote again, but his second epistle profited him as little.

I left him alone with Uncle Fritz while I went to fetch my Carl, and inform him that this Herr Briese was the very same who had paid his court to me without winning my love in return. "Wilhelmine," said my husband, "I trust that this Herr Briese will give me no occasion for jealousy!"

"Carl, look at yourself in the glass, and then let him have a look. Why, there is no question of a comparison!"—"Faithful devotion ends by touching a woman's heart."—"He was refused twice, and after getting the mustard he never made a third move; you know that as well as I."—"Don't be tragic, Wilhelmine. I am prepared to welcome Herr Briese."

We proceeded on our way past the new church which is being built on the Johannistisch, and immediately behind which the pleasure grounds extend. It is astonishing to see the number of curiosities that the people have in the booths on either side of the road, and the noise they make to induce passers-by to go in. Every one shouts that nothing like his wonder has ever been seen since the world was made. They have giants and dwarfs, panoramas with the most horrible accidents, learned horses who know precisely how old everybody is, as well as wolves

and trained goats, savages and Herculesees, and many other objects which art and science can produce at a trifle, for the best place only costs twopence.

My Carl suggested that we should go into a booth in front of which a female giant, who was painted on a huge picture, was cried up as being ever so many hundredweight, and possessing enormously big arms and legs. However, I signified to him that this was no sight for him. Nor was it.

Herr Briese could not get over the fact that the Hasenhaide had changed itself, so to speak, into a colossal fair. "It was much more romantic here formerly," he sighed in pain; "but that was long ago."—"When Old Nick was quite a boy, I suppose," remarked Uncle Fritz.—"And had to fetch spice-brandy for his grandmother," continued my husband in the same popular phraseology.—"Carl," I said respectfully, "what will Herr Briese think of you? Such phrases are not used in Rawitsch."—"It is all very well for you to jeer at me," returned Herr Briese; "but you try living for thirty years in Rawitsch, and you will be just as horrified to see the way Berlin increases in length and breadth."—"It can hardly circumscribe its limits to please you!" laughed Fritz.—"It would be unreasonable to wish it," said Herr Briese testily. "Do not take it amiss if I grieve that good old customs have to make way for modern ones. Everything is

gone to which my heart clung; but that was always my luck! Nothing favours me in Berlin." With these words he looked sorrowfully towards me, as if he wanted to burden me with the responsibility of his having vegetated meanwhile. But how could I help not taking a fancy to him?

Uncle Fritz clapped him good-naturedly on the shoulder and said: "Don't let us quarrel about it. Every one gets his dose of physic—the only question is as to how he will take it. And now let us go into 'the New World'—the entrance is my affair."—He got the tickets, taking them grandly for the best places, and we passed through the portals.

We got a table close to the balloon, which was just being filled; a number of soldiers were busy helping to hold the monster. "Any one can go up in it on payment of fifty marks," said Uncle Fritz to my Carl; "don't you feel inclined to let your *kite* * have a fly for once?"—"I forbid the use of such personalities!" I exclaimed. "You will keep your insults to yourself, unless you wish me to take a seat elsewhere!" Whereupon I got up, and looked as if my threat had been made in earnest. At this moment one of the balloon people came up to us with the warning, "Please do not tread on the pipe, or there might be an accident." I now noticed on the

* The German for kite is Drachen (dragon), which Frau Buchholz regards as an allusion to herself.

ground behind me a thick roll of oil-skin, through which the gas was conducted into the balloon, and this scarcely contributed to my pleasure. Should such a thing explode, one would be expedited into the blessed hereafter in less than no time.

“Carl,” I admonished him, “we will get away.” —“Don’t be ridiculous,” said Uncle Fritz.—“You, perhaps, have had your life insured! Mine is not,” I replied.—“Wilhelmine, nothing in the world will happen to us,” said my husband persuasively. “You cannot get a better view anywhere.” —“Herr Briese, will you give me your arm? One expects respect even though one may be in the Haide!”

He did not feel quite happy, either, in the neighbourhood of the gas-pipe, so he placed himself at my disposal with great alacrity. We forced a way for ourselves through the crowd and vanished.

We walked silently beside each other for a space, I being still so full of my first anger. And could I be gentle? Instead of Herr Briese feeling himself to some extent overcome, he prosed away as equably as if Berlin were a suburb of Rawitsch. Then my Carl would take an interest in the fat woman with the weights, in comparison with which his wife’s life is indifferent to him. And lastly, Uncle Fritz puts me down as a dragon in the presence of the

travelled gentleman! It would be a new fashion to put up with things like that.

But there was still worse to come. "I pity you sincerely," began Herr Briese, "for not being understood as you deserve to be."—"What do you mean by that?"—"Another would have fulfilled your every wish—nay, he still would do so—day by day. Oh, how unhappy you must be beside such a tyrant!"—"What tyrant do you mean?"—"Whom can I mean but your husband?"—"Now it's beginning to dawn on me," I interrupted him. "Do you wish to breed discord between me and my Carl? to paint my husband black and insinuate yourself into my good graces? That really does go beyond bounds. What are you thinking about? No, no, most worthy sir, I will none of you; no, not even if you anoint yourself with oiled butter. Good-bye to you!" I looked him piercingly through and through, and left him standing there in all his worthlessness. Such an old serpent!

It was not until we had left the Hasenhaide and the crowds of homeward-waltzing pleasure-seekers far behind us, that I was able to clothe the unheard-of in words. "What do you think can have happened?" I asked suggestively.—"I have not learned thought-reading."—"So you do not know what Herr Briese wanted?"—"Oh, yes; to go in quest of the ruins of his youthful reminiscences!"—"Carl, am I

a ruin?"—"Who says so?"—"You! It was for my sake he came. While making little of you, he had the audacity to attempt a sort of love-making, Carl."—"But really——"—"Don't be disturbed; he got his deserts."—"If only I had him here, I should belabour him as he deserved."—"Carl, do leave bodily prowess out of the affair; culture must turn the scale here. And I can tell you that he will make no second attempt. But I should like to request rather more consideration from you; such a thing could simply not occur then!"

"Minchen——"

"Carl, be silent. I shall need a long time to recover from my experiences of to-day."

CHAPTER XXIX

IN WHICH WE SAY FAREWELL TO THE BUCHHOLZ FAMILY

Finally let us join the Buchholzes at the wedding of Betti and Herr Schmidt, the junior partner in the firm, and the silver wedding of Carl and Wilhelmine; for the two events were celebrated on the same day.

Betti had wished for a very quiet wedding, and had her way. The two bridesmaids were Mila, the daughter of the Police-lieutenant, and Amanda Kulecke. Uncle Fritz undertook to arrange everything.

STRAINS of flowing, swelling song awoke us. Fritz's musical friends serenaded us from the court-yard. We cannot wreath a day so that it should have festive garlands, but if it greets us at dawn with elevating strains, then it too has put on festival apparel. "Carl," I said, when they had embarked on the third piece, "I have often objected to

the 'Whooping Cough,' but did I know that it could be like this?"

Uncle Fritz knocked. "Are you not up yet, sluggards?"—"Directly, directly!"

I suppose he could not exercise patience, considering what he had to do. When I reached the stairs I had to come to a standstill, I was so overcome; and my Carl was quite touched when he looked at the garlands that were wreathed round the banisters, and at the flowering shrubs that turned the entrance to our sitting-room into an arbour, while it was itself converted into a fir grove, in the midst of which Betti and Emmi stood and then hurried towards their parents. Nobody else was there. Thanks, my Fritz, for this hour!

After a while Frieda [the servant] brought breakfast, and Uncle Fritz followed her. "My dear brother-in-law," he said, "for five-and-twenty years you have managed to get along with my sister. You deserve to have a statue erected to you; I know her from her youth up!" "You! you!" I exclaimed. "You will never improve!" And then I held him in my arms.

Even the breakfast-table was surrounded with evergreens, and a vase with a small branch of elder-tree was placed in the middle of it; however, the branch had more buds than blossoms, two or three on the whole. "The bush in the garden means to

do its part," said Betti; "the first tiny buds have opened this morning."—They had not much perfume, but the old bush meant well; and if we have had our pleasure out of it year by year, to-day it delighted us more than ever.

"Will you have a look at the drawing-room and see whether you like it?" Uncle Fritz now asked. "We shall take the doors off later on, and will then possess a space for the festival of sufficient crowdedness. The tables which are laid have been placed in the back room, and will be brought in for the chief feed. Victuals will follow from a court restaurateur."—"And a hired waiter, Fritz?"—"Two of them."—"Why, that will be gorgeous!"

He opened the doors. Inside them also the walls were covered with fir-green, which would do no harm whatever, as the paper had been hanging for the longest possible time. My picture was placed there, and looked as if I were promenading about in a pine grove whose branches were interwoven with silver thread to typify the green and silver wedding. It was unique in its way.

And then just to look at the temple of offerings, as Fritz called the table on which the presents had been arranged, with the most exquisite baskets of flowers and nosegays! If they can do it anywhere, they understand how to arrange flowers in Berlin; but I never yet had seen anything to compare with these,

so fragrant they were, and all of them with silk ribbons and visiting cards fastened to them. And among them the presents, ranging from a nominal to a high value; nor were they contributed solely by relations, but also by business friends of my husband's, to whom, as it turned out, Fritz had given sundry hints. "We cannot accept these!" I exclaimed.—"Take them without further ado," Fritz answered; "they will squeeze the cost out of the next order they give."

The other table belonged to Betti. What a sight that was to look upon, with its numerous letters and telegrams, many more of which arrived in the course of the day! Visitors came also, and so the morning simply melted away under one's hands.

It was not until Betti, Felix, my husband and the Doctor drove to the registrar's office that an interruption took place.

So nothing came of my intention to rest. Uncle Fritz returned and took possession of the rooms to give them the last finishing touches, nor had we much time for delay.

First of all I helped Betti with her dressing, and then set to work on myself, to array myself in my new grey silk dress. It was made of German silk, extremely beautiful and very tastefully worked. Frieda, who was helpful in handing me things, ex-

pressed herself to the effect that it was very aristocratic. Then Emmi put the silver wreath on me.

"The number of the guests was almost complete," she said. "Uncle Fritz had turned the entrance-hall into a reception-room, which was very fairly filled already. As soon as the clergyman arrived, papa would fetch me. Fritz and Franz had come too; they were going to be good and not disturb any one."—"That may be taken for granted with Fritz, but who will go security for Franz? You had better go to them and keep them quiet. For a solemnity may easily be screamed to death."

Now at last I had a moment to myself, but the long-intended collective backward glance was not a success. My heart was too full.

I sat there neither awake nor yet asleep—nonentity seemed to be laid upon me until my Carl came.

I had not heard his entrance, and only noticed him as he stood before me with outstretched hands to raise me up. We looked at each other, face to face. He read my eyes, I his. Then my glance fell on the silver spray of myrtle on his breast, he looked down on the silver wreath in my hair, and said lovingly, "Come, silver bride!"

I laid my arm in his. Speech was impossible to me.

As we were going down I regained my composure after the first steps; I could even bear to listen to the

notes of a harmonium, which was hidden behind some plants. Doris, who was listening about near the entrance, in search of information, said: "They are all of them inside already."

This was the fact. The invited guests were sitting in a half circle composed of several rows, Betti and Felix being in the middle, on one side of them Emmi and the twins, on the other the Frau Police-lieutenant. I took cursory note of this while we were slowly advancing towards the clergyman, who was waiting for us on a slightly raised platform. The music was silent, and he began his address.

I really only recovered my composure when I was sitting beside my Carl on the chair that Betti had just been occupying, for she and Felix had now advanced to the clergyman. Being still too greatly touched by what had taken place, I was unable to follow the pastor. I certainly did hear words, but they fell abroad like loose crumbs, and I only had an indistinct vision of the two youthful figures. However, my pulse gradually slackened and my sight grew clearer. Betti looked almost too severe for a bride, but on the other hand there was a look on Felix's face like the rosy dawn of a day that promises to be rich in happiness. I only noticed his white necktie, which gave me the impression of having been frequently washed already.

I looked at the witnesses of the marriage: they were faultlessly attired. I looked about me; the gentlemen connected with the business had put on brand-new satin ties, and the younger of them, Herr Hoff, even went the length of having on an under-waistcoat bound with red. It seemed strange to me about Felix, for he is generally as careful of his appearance as a lieutenant got up for a party, the only difference being that he does not curry-comb his head when entering a room full of people. And then the fashion of the thing! There are none of the sort to be had.

But had I not seen it once already? Where could it have been? That is it! In Tegel, during the days of the midges, Felix lost his necktie in the water on one occasion, and Betti made him one out of the mosquito curtain. That was when they had seen each other for the first time. And now he was wearing it on his wedding-day, in remembrance of those bygone days! How he must have loved and valued it in order to treasure it up so faithfully! I never should have thought that a little bit of muslin could have looked so charming.

We now saw more than ever how cleverly Uncle Fritz, as leader of the whole, had arranged everything. While the numerous congratulations were being continued in the entrance-hall, which by the aid of hangings looked at the very least like a coun-

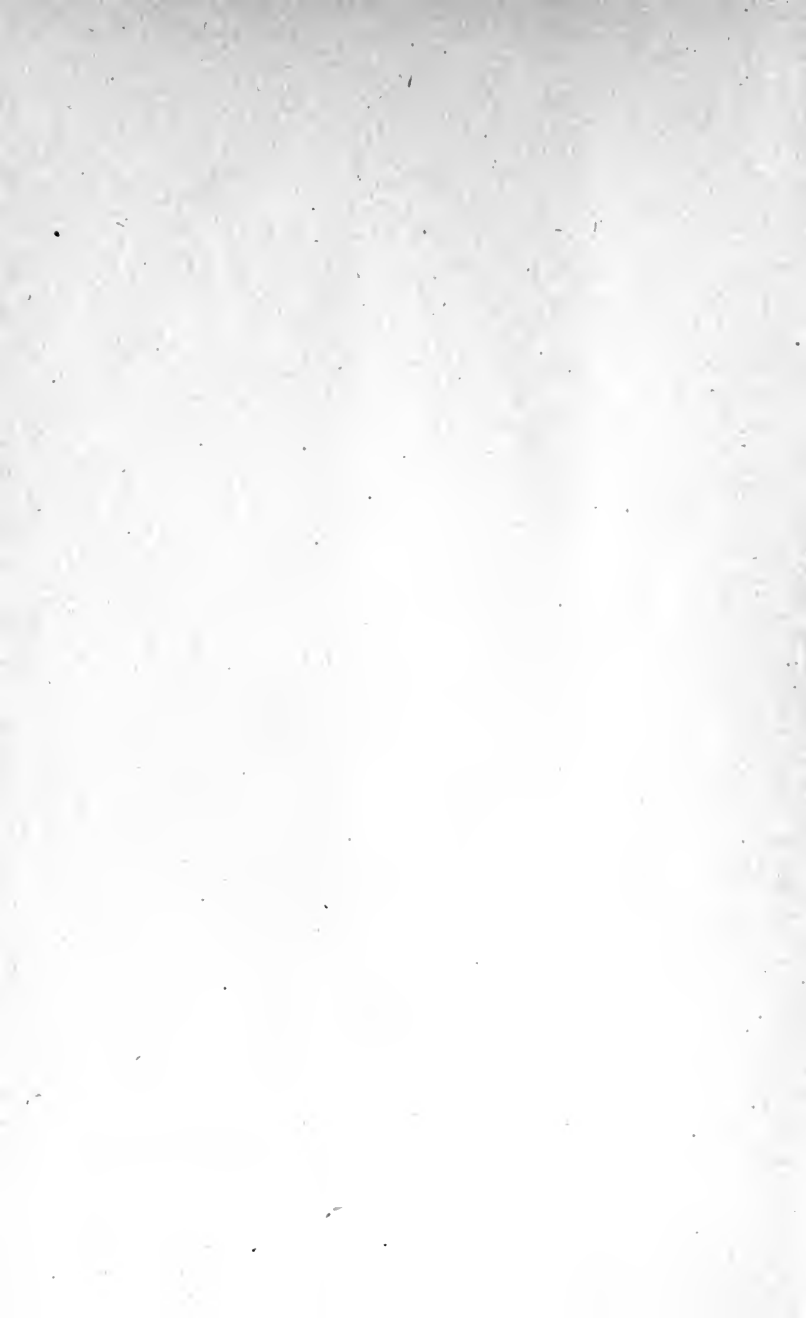
cillor of commerce's, the hired waiters were transporting the tables so rapidly to their proper places, that the meal could be begun in the shortest space of time. We bridal couples were placed opposite each other at the principal table.

The Police-lieutenant gave the first toast in honour of the silver couple. It was a little long, but choice as regards language. He wished us a further five-and-twenty years, until the golden wedding, and that we might all be at our posts then. Then we had another course, and Uncle Fritz drank to the health of the young couple. But as usual, there were marginal notes. What was the meaning of his dragging me into his speech and congratulating Felix on getting me for a mother-in-law, as there were worse?

The rest of the day was festivity and dances. Let me close with the only remark of her own, at dinner, which Frau Buchholz reports:—

“You can take some more with perfect safety, if you like it,” I said to my Carl; “and just fish the craw-fish out of the turbot sauce; there are not enough of them anyhow to satisfy the Doctor’s appetite!”

And so farewell to some simple, honest, un-kultured people!



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